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THE ROLE OF AUDIENCE JUDGMENT IN TWO PLAYS BY BERNARD SHAW

by

Elsa Rice

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Role of Audience Judgment in Two Plays by Bernard Shaw" submitted by Elsa Rice in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study of two plays by Bernard Shaw is to analyze the processes by which he elicits audience response in order to bring about certain judgments about those plays and the ideas embodied in them. The first chapter examines Shaw's didactic purpose in terms of the philosophy he preaches and the techniques he employs to convert the audience to it. Generally, Shaw makes the audience a participant in the drama, engaging and managing its emotions and intellect. Specifically, he uses three techniques: the audience-surrogate, the use of mechanicalness in comedy, and conviction of sin, and all three are defined and illustrated. Shaw's philosophy of the Life Force and of realism vis-à-vis idealism and cynicism establishes the basis for these techniques of manipulating audience response, and it is therefore summarized with a view to the judgments the audience seems directed to make.

The second and third chapters on "John Bull's Other Island" and "Major Barbara," respectively, apply and analyze these techniques in the light of Shaw's philosophy. In "John Bull's Other Island," the audience response is seen to move from the cynicism of the audience-surrogate, Larry Doyle, toward the realism of Peter Keegan, while at the same time deflected off the Philistine practicality and idealistic foolishness of Broadbent. The judgment elicited at the culmination of the play is a qualified acknowledgment of Shaw's viewpoint. In "Major Barbara," a play about conversion, the audience is shown to participate in three educative processes, and finally to shed their idealism, along with the audience-surrogates, Barbara and Cusins, in the name of realism. The judgment

drawn at the end of this play is an affirmation of Shaw's philosophy.

In conclusion, the two plays are compared, especially regarding their dissimilar endings. The implications they have with respect to Shaw's didactic purpose and the effectiveness of his techniques are examined, with a final note on the residual value of Shaw's dramatic technique of making the audience become the drama.

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CHAPTER I

THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

> The study of the drama is the study of how the stage compels its audience to be involved in its actual processes. The spectator interprets and so contributes to and finally becomes the play, whose image is all and only in his mind.[1]

The concept that the art of theatre is a transposition rather than a transmittal of ideas and feelings from the stage to the audience is eminently applicable to the plays of George Bernard Shaw. The purpose of this study is to explore the idea that the locus of Shaw's theatre is in the mind of the spectator. In two plays, "John Bull's Other Island" and "Major Barbara," I shall attempt to demonstrate how and why Shaw stages plays so that the audience "becomes" the drama.

Shaw's purpose is didactic, and he desires us to think in a certain way. As he seeks to make us alter our ideas, he employs specific techniques in his drama to do so. Martin Meisel gives us the outline of Shaw's method, as follows:

> His plays, like all plays, are designed to engage and manage an audience by creating and organizing a flow of response. They are, in other words, strategies for achieving certain aesthetic ends. Shaw's overall dramatic strategy, however, was also directed toward creating a residual impact; that is, his plays are not designed merely to stimulate the audience for two hours or even to purge it of stresses in some Aristotelian fashion, leaving its members essentially unchanged. Rather, they are designed to culminate in a state of feeling, often including uneasiness and unresolved stress, that will effect a permanent change in consciousness bearing on social change.[2]

By examining the devices or techniques by which Shaw "engages and manages" his audience, we shall discover how he stages his drama in the mind of

the spectator. Through an understanding of his philosophical and psychological ideas, we shall determine why he does so, and what "flow of response" it is he desires in the audience.

"Both authors and audiences," writes Shaw, "realise more and more that the incidents and situations in a play are only pretences, and that what is interesting is the way we should feel and argue about them if they were real."[3] From our emotions, we feel, and from our intellects, we argue. By admitting here that real emotion and intellect are not only analogous to pretended emotion and intellect, but also immanent in the pretence, Shaw reveals his didactic purpose, and intimates his strategy. The involvement of both intellect and emotion to serve a didactic purpose suggests a kinship between the art of the drama and the art of rhetoric. Just as the classical orator of old scrupulously chose and delivered rhetorical devices to elicit a specific response from his auditors, so Shaw selects each piece of stagecraft to manipulate his spectators. In the theatre of Shaw, "we are not flattered spectators killing an idle hour with an ingenious and amusing entertainment: we are 'guilty creatures sitting at a play.'" By

> making the spectators themselves the persons of the drama, and the incidents of their own lives its incidents, the disuse of the old stage tricks by which audiences had to be induced to take an interest in unreal people and improbable circumstances, and the substitution of a forensic technique of recrimination, disillusion, and penetration through ideals to the truth, with a free use of all the rhetorical and lyrical arts of the orator, the preacher, the pleader, and the rhapsodist,[4]

Shaw engages the audience in his drama.

Lamentably, one cannot turn to a glossary of dramatic devices of persuasion as one can to a glossary of rhetorical terms. One purpose of this study is to define some of the devices that Shaw uses to further

his "dramatic rhetoric." Therefore, three principal devices will be defined, and then demonstrated with reference to "John Bull's Other Island" and "Major Barbara." Those three devices are: the use of an audience-surrogate, the use of mechanicalness or rigidity of character, situation, and dialogue to effect comedy, and finally, the use of a special climax in the plot that may be called the moment of conviction of sin.

Martin Meisel originated the term "audience-surrogate," and by it he means those characters in the plays "who stand closest to the audience in that their blamelessness seems to give them the right to judge and condemn according to conventional standards. These are the stage personages whom Shaw overwhelms with the knowledge of taint and sin."[5] Shaw captures the sympathies and expectations of the audience through the surrogate, who is generally invested with the ideals of society. The surrogate often flatters the spectators, for they accept his many superior talents and status as more or less equivalent to their own talents and status.

The audience-surrogate may be used in several ways to manipulate the audience. He may undergo a change of thinking, carrying the audience with him as Reverend Anderson does in "The Devil's Disciple." The audience may reject him when the less attractive side of his nature is revealed as it finally must reject Harry Trench and Vivie Warren in those two most "unpleasant" plays. The role of the audience-surrogate may shift from one character to another, as, for example, it shifts from Sir Howard Hallam to Lady Cicely in "Captain Brassbound's Conversion." The role may be a shared role, as in "Major Barbara," where Cusins and Barbara comprise an audience-surrogate duet. There are many ways of handling this character

so that, through identification with it, the audience will alter its thinking. It may only reject an attitude it has been comfortable with, but it may, in addition, adopt a new and more "correct" Shavian attitude. On the other hand, it may remain uncomfortably confused and bewildered because of the inadequacy of its surrogate, and the disturbingly radical or alien qualities of the alternative.

The identification of mechanicalness or rigidity with comedy is asserted by Henri Bergson in his essay, "On Laughter."[6] To Bergson, when life resembles a machine, automatic, uncontrollable, and thoughtless, it is comic. The nature of life is to evolve dynamically and purposefully, and it requires, therefore, the attributes of adaptability and flexibility to facilitate its function. Society, on the other hand, in order to cope with the fluidity of life, imposes order and convention. When order and convention impede change, rather than shape it, the seeds of comedy are sown. In other words, when the tension between evolution and order is overbalanced on the order side, there is the potential for humour. So, when character, situation, or dialogue proceeds in an automatic manner, as they do in puppetry, the way is paved for laughter. That Shaw shares this view of comedy is evinced in "The Sanity of Art," where he describes Max Nordau as betraying, with "laughable punctuality,"[7] the thoughtless conventionalism of his opinions.

Bergson insists that the audience must not be sympathetic to the comic character if laughter is to follow, for to laugh is to "intimidate by humiliating."[8] "The classical definition of comedy," Shaw writes, is "drama that chastens morals by ridicule."[9] Insofar as the morals of the comic character are chastened, the audience shares the position of the playwright, that of judge. As judge, the spectator is superior to the

comic character, and to that extent unsympathetic, else he would be unable to chasten. Shaw, however, believes that "to laugh without sympathy is a ruinous abuse of a noble function."[10] This is not contrary to Bergson, for Shaw also believes that the goal of the writer of comedy is "to wound the susceptibilities of his audience,"[11] as well as those of the comic character. Sympathy must follow hard upon judgment if this function is to be fulfilled. Thus, to the extent that the spectators see themselves in the comic character, acting mechanically, they too are chastened, and by their own laughter.

Through his adaptation of nineteenth century dramatic plots,[12] Shaw exploits the comic potential of the mechanical in situation, character, and dialogue. All the conventions of melodramatic situation are present in "The Devil's Disciple": the substitution on the gallows of one man for another, the love interest of a good woman for the hero, the miraculous rescue at the last moment. Though Dick refuses to share Judith's melodramatic attitude to his sacrifice, the sacrifice is melodramatic nevertheless. Shaw evokes comedy by contrasting the machine-like conventionalism of the situation to Dick's unconventional thinking. An example of the puppet-like comic character is Sergius, in "Arms and the Man," who cannot prevent himself from heroic posturing. Burgess' mechanically literal interpretation of the word "mad," as applied to the other characters in "Candida," makes him a comic character, and also contributes a humorous variation on the serious theme of the play. By making us laugh at what is done automatically and mechanically, Shaw makes us laugh at the attitudes that prompt such thoughtless action. Therefore, he requires our consideration of the validity of those attitudes, and consequently prompts in us a new way of thinking.

"My conscience," Shaw claims, "is the genuine pulpit article: it annoys me to see people comfortable when they ought to be uncomfortable; and I insist on making them think in order to bring them to conviction of sin."[13] This third device in Shaw's dramatic rhetoric, conviction of sin, may be explained as the spectator's discovery that his thinking has been wrong regarding the specific theme of the play, at least, and that his thinking regarding life in general has probably been equally false. In the Puritan tradition, conviction of sin is the very first step on the road to salvation, and so it is with Shaw. The Shavian sinner, discovering his folly and iniquity, is overwhelmed by the extent and magnitude of his sin, and his complicity in the sins of society. Self-knowledge spurs him on to find solace and comfort in Shavian salvation.

Though Shaw intends to bring the audience to a conviction of sin, I must admit here that the complexity of his plays provides no insurance that he always succeeds. But I do think he succeeds in making the spectator uncomfortable with the ideas he presents. Possibly, he over-estimates the intellectual capacity of the spectator, and under-estimates the strength of his unconscious conventionality. For the purpose of my study of audience response, however, I have quite sanguinely posited an audience tailor-made to Shaw's intentions, because I hope to clarify why his plays leave us uncomfortably perplexed. The audience response, in reality, is not as clear-cut as I suggest, not because Shaw's art is flawed by paradox or confusion, but because it is profound. Therefore, in my attempt to decipher Shaw's message, I am forced to simplify where Shaw reflects the complicated nature of human response.

Conviction of sin, its timing and its results, vary from play to play. In "Widowers' Houses," Harry Trench and the audience come to a

conviction of sin at the midpoint of the play, when Harry is "morally beggared" by his discovery of his unwitting complicity in slum landlordism. The remainder of the play deepens but never resolves that conviction of sin, for Harry is powerless to extricate himself, and there is nobody on whom to shift the blame. Very little hope lights the future. Though it might seem that a conviction of sin is established at the end of Act II in "Mrs. Warren's Profession," through Vivie, the audience is allowed to procrastinate, refusing to accept the validity of Mrs. Warren's choice in the present as well as in the past, and refusing to lay the blame on society where it fairly should. At the very end of the play, the audience comes to a true conviction of sin by rejecting Vivie's cold and conventional spurning of her "fallen" mother. "Mrs. Warren's Profession" and "Widowers' Houses" both provide only the first step on the road to Shavian salvation, but the fact that it takes three acts to get that far is suggestive. Shaw implies that wrong attitudes are tenacious, and that it requires a great struggle to uproot them.

In other plays, Shaw times conviction of sin earlier in the action, and follows it with more positive results. In "Candida," for example, conviction of sin occurs as soon as the audience realizes that Morell's ostensibly happy marriage is not as happy as he thinks. Candida shocks Morell and the audience by echoing Eugene's critical remarks regarding Morell's character. The remainder of the play examines the true state of affairs, clearing away the sentimental and vain illusions of Morell and the audience. It then debates the real alternatives, shorn of the attractions of romance, but ultimately softened by Candida's true feelings for her husband and her role. Thus, in "Candida," Shaw first shows the audience that it is mistaken. Then he elaborates upon its

wrong thinking on the matrimonial state in detail. Finally, he offers the correct perspective on the Morell marriage.

The audience-surrogate, comic rigidity, and conviction of sin all serve as devices to change the audience's thinking in the way Shaw desires. But what manner of thinking does he desire? Shaw indicates what constitutes Shavian sin, and moreover, what he sees as valid and authentic thinking, in the Preface to "The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet":

> I am not an ordinary playwright in general practice. I am a specialist in immoral and heretical plays. My reputation has been gained by my persistent struggle to force the public to reconsider its morals. . . . I write my plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinions in these matters.[14]

Shavian sin is conventional morality, and valid and authentic thinking embraces what the conventional consider immorality and heresy. Morality and ideals, to Shaw, stand in the way of right thinking in much the same way that, to Bergson, order and convention impede the dynamic growth of life. This similarity in their thinking is unsurprising, for they share a belief in the Élan Vital, or the Life Force.

In answer to the question, "What is a child?" Shaw writes, "An experiment. A fresh attempt to produce the just man made perfect: that is, to make humanity divine."[15] This definition is based on his philosophy of the Life Force, described as follows:

> His religion is the faith that a purposive will created man and operates through him: "I, as a Creative Evolutionist, postulate a creative Life Force or Evolutionary Appetite seeking power over circumstances and mental development by the method of Trial and Error, making mistake after mistake, but still winning its finally irresistible way."[16]

To Shaw, the life principle is will, and he believes that man must hold himself in readiness for change, lending himself to the evolutionary

appetite as a trial in the experiment to make humanity divine.

To understand and interpret this ever changing, purposive life, man must create morals and ideals as goals, because he cannot see the unknowable, divine plan that the will of the Life Force pursues. But such man-made goals must be only tentative, and must themselves succumb to change. As Shaw says, "It is always a case of 'the ideal is dead: long live the ideal!'" (Q, 40). Of course, this is just what morals and ideals do not do, for they are intrinsically static. And, by this process, morals and ideals become to Shaw sinful; that is to say, opposed to the Life Force. Therefore, in his plays, he attacks morals and ideals, advocating immorality and heresy, because "the tragedy and comedy of life lie in the consequences, sometimes terrible, sometimes ludicrous, of our persistent attempts to found our institutions on the ideals suggested to our imaginations by our half-satisfied passions, instead of on a genuinely scientific natural history."[17] What he champions in his plays is iconoclasm, the destruction of the morals and ideals that encrust themselves on the Life Force, hindering its "finally irresistible way."

In keeping with his philosophy of the Life Force, Shaw's understanding of the human character distinguishes between two types, which he calls, in "The Quintessence of Ibsenism," idealists and realists (Q, 25-31). Most of society (and, therefore, most of the audience), he asserts, are idealists of various sorts, who cannot "face the inexorable" facts of life, and so mask them with a more agreeable guise, called ideals, or morality. Many characters in Shaw's plays, not surprisingly, turn out to be idealists of one sort or another. There are idealists proper, who truly believe their ideals are real because reality is too ugly, and ardently strive to maintain the fiction. They are in what Shaw

calls the "Impossiblist position" because they think it is impossible that the facts are true.[18] There are also "Philistines," who fail to see any discrepancy between the ideals propounded by the idealists and a "scientific natural history," or reality. They are complacent, and content to accept ideals as reality because they have not noticed the difference between harsh facts and beautiful ideals.

A variation of the idealist is the cynic, who does see the discrepancy between ideals and reality, but desponds of reconciling the two. "The lot," says Shaw, "of the man who sees life truly and thinks about it romantically is Despair."[19] Pessimism about life is "an illusion founded on the common practice of comparing the status quo, not with the socially practicable alternative to it, but with an individual's ideal."[20] Though he knows life is not at all like his ideals, he wishes it were. Cynicism is thus a sure mark of inherent idealism. His adamant retention of ideals, despite the irreconcilable evidence of reality precludes the possession of "that element of truth to nature . . . without which romance ends in disillusion and cynicism."[21] One might say that a cynic is an idealist brought to conviction of sin, and, furthermore, brought to his knees as a result. There are many cynics in Shaw's plays (perhaps in anticipation of a probable audience response), especially in "John Bull's Other Island" and "Major Barbara."

The other sort of character Shaw discerns in society is the realist. A rarer character than the idealist in the plays, the realist is "the man strong enough to face the truth the idealists are shirking"; he is an iconoclast, who rends "the beautiful veil they and their poets have woven to hide the unbearable face of the truth" (Q, 27-28). He is both vessel and vassal of the Life Force. This evolutionary appetite is

the will or spirit within man that drives him forward, and therefore drives life forward, generation after generation. The Life Force has no way to live except through the individual, and so man is its vessel. The will of the Life Force is irresistible to man, so he is its vassal, and must do as it compels. The alternative is an aimless, will-less life of illusion. The realist is "the philosophic man: he who seeks in contemplation to discover the inner will of the world, in invention to discover the means of fulfilling that will, and in action to do that will by the so-discovered means."[22] He is "a religious person," who "conceives himself or herself to be the instrument of some purpose in the universe which is a high purpose, and is the motive power of evolution--that is of a continual ascent in organization and power and life and extension of life."[23]

The will of the Life Force, manifest in the realist, is to Shaw a passion both mystical and real, known to man through instinct and intuition, yet nonetheless part of, indeed the beginning, of what Shaw calls the "natural history." The natural history is the real facts about the development of man and society. Thus, Shaw explains, in "The Sanity of Art":

> We can now, as soon as we are strong-minded enough, drop the pessimism, the rationalism, the supernatural theology and all the other subterfuges to which we cling because we are afraid to look life straight in the face and see in it, not the fulfillment of a moral law or of the deductions of reason, but the satisfaction of a passion in us of which we can give no rational account whatever.[24]

The realist imagines no illusions to sugarcoat the painful realities of life. He does, however, possess a very active imagination.

The imagination of the realist gives him "the power to imagine

things as they are without actually sensing them" in a concrete way. It also affords him the means "of foreseeing and being prepared for realities as yet unexperienced, and of testing the feasibility and desirability of serious Utopias."[25] Thus, through the utilization of his insight to benefit mankind, he is man's one true hope for a better world. The realist is able to fulfill the Life Force because, through his ability to face the facts, and to imaginatively foresee future realities, he is adaptable, even prepared, for change in a way that the idealist and Philistine, clinging pertinaciously to the security of their ideals and morality, will never be. Their ideals must remain constant at all cost. Shaw condemns the idealist for perverting his powers of imagination from the service of the Life Force and world-betterment to the slavery of his romantic fancies and self-delusions. The Philistine's is the sin of omission, the disgrace of atrophied imagination. Conviction of sin cannot come to him because he does not know Shavian good from Shavian evil.

The faculty that distinguishes good from evil is moral judgment. The reason that Shaw stages his plays in the minds of the spectators, the reason why his audience must "become" his drama, is that Shaw wishes to cultivate true moral judgment in the audience. The evolutionary nature of life proscribes any moral code, in the sense of an absolute morality, on which man can base his judgment. Thus, Shaw believes that "though character is independent of circumstances, conduct is not; and our moral judgments of character are not: both are circumstantial" (JBOI, 228). This theory of moral relativity he is at pains to inculcate in the spectator. What Shaw insists on is "that there is no golden rule; that conduct must justify itself by its effect upon life and not by its conformity to any rule or ideal" (Q, 125).

What better way to prove the relativity of moral judgment than to manipulate the audience into making obviously conflicting judgments? Accordingly, Shaw's method is to "trick the spectator into forming a meanly false judgment, and then convict him of it in the next act, often to his grievous mortification" (Q, 145). The audience-surrogate woos the audience into the position of judge, and often enough it is his own comic rigidity that leads it later to judge him in his turn. To Shaw, society deals with life in terms of absolutes, so consequently, life leaves it behind before long. So, in his plays, the spectator finds his faculty of judgment is irrelevant, because of his ignorance of reality, of the ever changing facts of life. He is brought to a conviction of sin by the unarguable evidence of the facts in contrast to the immateriality of his ideals.

Knowledge of reality is the first condition of moral judgment. "Virtue chooses good from evil; and without knowledge there can be no choice."[26] Because good and evil are as changeable as life itself, virtue is relative to specific circumstances. Knowledge of those circumstances is thus imperative. Only when the spectator learns the facts, when he becomes the realist, removing the romance that conceals the reality beneath, can he make a true moral judgment. Paradoxically, it requires some exercise of conventional judgment to discern the falsity of ideals. Thus, the spectator must participate in the process of the play to come around to Shaw's way of thinking. To Shaw, the function of comedy is "turning the searchlight of the keenest moral and intellectual analysis" on reality, which the idealist keeps rigidly "outside the moral consciousness."[27] To force the public, his audience, to "reconsider its morals" and convert to his opinions, Shaw compels it to be involved in

processes of judgment that make up his plays.

His didactic purpose, generally speaking, is to make realists of his spectators, or at least to make the spectator stand out of the way of the realist and the Life Force. His task is threefold: first, to destroy the idealism obscuring the facts; second, to display and demonstrate reality, the true nature of things; and third, to cultivate the faculty of accurate moral judgment. This third aim, obviously, is necessary to the accomplishment of the first two, so it is imperative that the audience "become" the drama. Only by so doing can the audience distinguish reality from romance, and so not hinder the Life Force in its "finally irresistible way." In "John Bull's Other Island" and "Major Barbara," Shaw attacks idealism by undermining the idealists, and delivers the facts from the mouths of the realists. But, we, as the audience, must enter the play as judges to discern this process.

FOOTNOTES

[1]J. L. Styan, Drama, Stage, and Audience (London & New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1975), p. 4.

[2]Martin Meisel, "Shaw and Revolution," Shaw: Seven Critical Essays, ed. Norman Rosenblood (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1971), pp. 106-107, emphasis mine.

[3]George Bernard Shaw, as quoted in Archibald Henderson, "George Bernard Shaw Self-Revealed," Fortnightly Review, NS 119 (January-June 1926), 435.

[4]Shaw, "The Quintessence of Ibsenism," Major Critical Essays (London: Constable, 1932), p. 146. All subsequent references to this essay will be included in the text, in parentheses, giving the abbreviation, "Q," with the page reference.

[5]Meisel, Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theater (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), p. 129.

[6]Henri Bergson, "On Laughter," Comedy, intro. & appendix by Wylie Sypher (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956), pp. 59-190.

[7]Shaw, Major Critical Essays, p. 320.

[8]Bergson, p. 188.

[9]Shaw, Pen Portraits and Reviews (London: Constable, 1932), pp. 260-61.

[10]Shaw, Our Theatre In The Nineties, 3 vols. (London: Constable, 1931), II, 118.

[11]Shaw, as quoted in Archibald Henderson, Man of the Century (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1956), p. 538, n.

[12]Meisel, Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theater.

[13]Shaw, "Epistle Dedicatory" to "Man and Superman," The Bodley Head Bernard Shaw Collected Plays With Their Prefaces, 7 vols. (London: The Bodley Head, 1970-1974), II, 495. All references to Shaw's plays and

prefaces will be from this edition. Quotations from "John Bull's Other Island" and "Major Barbara," in vols. II and III respectively, will be included in the text, in parentheses, giving the abbreviations "JBOI" and "MB," with the page reference.

[14]Shaw, III, 698, emphasis mine.

[15]Shaw, "Parents and Children," IV, 20.

[16]Gerald Weales, Religion in Modern English Drama (Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press, 1961), p. 55.

[17]Shaw, "Preface" to "Plays Pleasant," I, 385.

[18]Shaw, Collected Letters 1898-1910, ed. Dan H. Laurence (London: Max Reinhardt Ltd., 1972), p. 566.

[19]Shaw, "Preface" to "Three Plays for Puritans," II, 37.

[20]Shaw, as quoted in Charles Carpenter, Bernard Shaw and the Art of Destroying Ideals; The Early Plays (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p. 233, n. 20.

[21]Shaw, Everybody's Political What's What (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1944), p. 197.

[22]Shaw, "Man and Superman," II, 664.

[23]Shaw, Religious Speeches, ed. Warren S. Smith (Pittsburg: Penn. State Univ. Press, 1963), p. 38.

[24]Shaw, Major Critical Essays, p. 310.

[25]Shaw, "Parents and Children," pp. 138-39.

[26]Shaw, "Parents and Children," p. 129.

[27]Shaw, Our Theatre In The Nineties, III, 88.

CHAPTER II

"JOHN BULL'S OTHER ISLAND"

> Theater to Shaw was more than just an entertainment. He saw it as part of the common spiritual heritage of man, detecting in it a fundamental unity with Church, each offering 'communion' in its own terms to its congregation. Theater, he maintained, 'is really a weekday church': a good play 'is essentially identical with a church service as a combination of artistic ritual, profession of faith, and sermon.'[1]

Though Shaw wrote other plays with more ostensibly "religious" themes, nowhere is he more the preacher and professor of faith than in his Irish play, "John Bull's Other Island." From the holy ground of the island of the saints springs a Shavian heavenly emissary, Peter Keegan, hearkening the unredeemed to the one true way of the Life Force. Guiding the audience response toward communion with this most saintly of all his characters, Shaw's play is a sermon, and his text, "that honor is worth its danger and its cost, and that life is worthless without honor" (JBOI, 869).

Shaw describes his idea of honour in the "Epistle Dedicatory" to "Man and Superman," as follows:

> This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. And also the only real tragedy in life is the being used by personally-minded men for purposes which you recognize to be base.[2]

Honour consists in serving the Life Force through the individual's realistic imagination and free will. In contrast, dishonour is worthless

idealism, for only through idealism does man view happiness as a goal in life, a goal inevitably disappointed. Idealism is to dishonour what realism is to honour. Honour is particularly relevant to the three main characters of "John Bull's Other Island," Larry Doyle, Tom Broadbent, and Peter Keegan.

It is important to remember that "John Bull's Other Island" was written originally for an Irish audience. Shaw writes in the "Preface for Politicians" the following analysis of his intentions with regard to the play:

> Writing the play for an Irish audience, I thought it would be good for them to be shewn very clearly that the loudest laugh they could raise at the expense of the absurdest Englishman was not really a laugh on their side; that he would succeed where they would fail; that he could inspire strong affection and loyalty in an Irishman who knew the world and was moved only to dislike, mistrust, impatience and even exasperation by his own countrymen. (JBOI, 809)

On the face of it, this statement seems to be clearly anti-Irish. However, Shaw means the play to be <u>good</u> for the Irish, to show them that they are wrong--even more so than the "absurdest Englishman." The play attempts to correct that wrong through the exposure of a certain brand of idealism, cynicism, which Shaw saw to be typically Irish. He exposes it by means of the audience-surrogate, the use of mechanicalness in comedy, and conviction of sin. Cynicism, of course, is not an exclusively Irish weakness, but Shaw gives depth to cynical idealism by colouring it with nationalism. Love and loyalty being the conventional contexts in which honour and dishonour are important considerations, not surprisingly, we find in "John Bull's Other Island" both a patriotic theme and a love interest.

Shaw wants to bring the Irish audience to conviction of sin, and

so Larry Doyle, an Irishman, is the audience-surrogate. Shaw does much in Act I to draw the sympathies, hopes, and expectations of the audience in line with Larry's. But, while the play addresses Irish themes specifically, it deals more generally with the universal problems of cynicism and dishonour. Therefore, Larry's representative qualities are not confined to those with which an Irish spectator would identify. Any audience can identify with a character who is "Rather refined and goodlooking on the whole," with a "clever head" (JBOI, 902).

His first action is to expose the sham Irishman, Tim Haffigan, an action sure to endear him to the hearts of Irish spectators, who undoubtedly see through Haffigan, and are as insulted by him as Larry is. Haffigan's stage-Irishman pose entirely dupes Broadbent, however, strengthening the audience's sense of superiority to this "absurdest Englishman" whose credulity has been apparent from the outset. Larry displays a judgment of character superior to Broadbent's, so the audience and Larry are aligned. Larry's second action is to express his regret at Broadbent's foreclosure of Nick Lestrange's property at Rosscullen. Appealing to the Irish sensitivity to English exploitation, Larry's distress parallels the audience's sense of injustice. In Act I, Larry's remarkable insight with respect to both Broadbent and Ireland, as well as his evident success in business, appeals to the audience's self-esteem. Finally, Larry appears to be honestly self-critical, suggesting to the spectators a similar humility in themselves, so that the initially flattering self-portrait, which he presents to them, seems irresistibly realistic.

By this strong credibility, admirable business acumen, and fineness of character, Larry wins the audience's identification, but not

without a struggle. Larry's "instinct against going back to Ireland" (JBOI, 907), and his reasons for it, may disturb the audience's close sympathy for him. It is an offence to loyalty and patriotic sentiment. Larry admits to Broadbent, with characteristic humility, "You know the way I nag, and worry, and carp, and cavil, and disparage, and am never satisfied and never quiet, and try the patience of my best friends," by way of explanation for his caustic remark, "Never mind my heart: an Irishman's heart is nothing but his imagination" (JBOI, 907). Larry's awareness of his own cynicism is winning, and his attitude is calculated to strike a much deeper chord in the audience than glib patriotism ever could.

His distaste for sentimental patriotism derives from an intrinsically patriotic distress for the present conditions in Ireland. Larry shows he does care when he says, "(With sudden anguish). Rosscullen! oh, good Lord, Rosscullen! The dullness! the hopelessness! the ignorance! the bigotry!" (JBOI, 909). There is no sense of treachery in relinquishing sentimental patriotism because Larry retains stature, admirability, and dignity. Larry's realistic critique of Ireland is consequently more palatable than otherwise. In any case, his critique is permeated with nostalgia and affection for Ireland:

> But your wits cant thicken in that soft moist air, on those white springy roads, in those misty rushes and brown bogs, on those hillsides of granite rocks and magenta heather. Youve [the English] no such colors in the sky, no such lure in the distance, no such sadness in the evenings. (JBOI, 909)

Because he laments the sorry condition of his homeland, while revealing a distinct fondness for it, Larry Doyle captures the sympathy of the audience much more vitally than mere flag-waving ever could.

This is not to say, however, that audiences, Irish or otherwise, could not be disgruntled by Larry's rather harsh assessment of Ireland. The audience-surrogate is invested with the ideals of society (and thus those of the audience), and is therefore an idealist. But how can Larry Doyle possibly be an idealist, when he so pessimistically describes the ugly reality of Ireland? Indeed, Shaw describes him, in the "Preface for Politicians," as having "the freedom from illusion, the power of facing facts, the nervous industry, the sharpened wits, the sensitive pride of the imaginative man who has fought his way up through social persecution and poverty" (JBOI, 810). But Larry Doyle only seems to be a realist; he is nevertheless an idealist at bottom, and that special type of idealist, a cynic.

The cynic, despairingly desiring that reality conform with his ideals, is very much "a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making [him] happy." This is the root of Larry's cynicism, as he reveals by the following speech:

> But it's the charm [Irish charm] of a dream. Live in contact with dreams and you will get something of their charm: live in contact with facts and you will get something of their brutality. I wish I could find a country where the facts were not brutal and the dreams not unreal. (JBOI, 919)

It is Larry's cynicism about Ireland that disturbs the audience, but it does not destroy its sympathetic identification with him. His cynicism has quite a different effect.

In Shaw's view, Irish cynicism, often displayed in a debilitating derisiveness, is more insidious than overt idealism.[3] It is this cynicism that allows the Englishman Broadbent his despicable success in the face of

Irish failure, and the derisiveness it meets is a dishonour to the Irish. Having eased the audience out from behind the more obvious idealism of the "celtic twilight" variety, Shaw employs the audience-surrogate throughout the rest of the play to destroy the derisive cynicism that plagues Ireland. For the audience adopts Larry Doyle's cynical attitude.

The vacuity of Broadbent's conventional sentimentality for Irish charm reinforces this cynicism. The audience will scorn the sentiments and ideals mouthed by Broadbent and staged by Haffigan. In Act II and Act III, the realistic portrayal of the Rossculleners confirms Larry's cynical assessment of the Irish situation. The most significant result of the spectator's adoption of Larry's pessimistic view is his endorsement of the Syndicate's plans for redevelopment of Rosscullen as a progressive and beneficial venture. That the local Irish are a Hopeless lot, wallowing in moroseness, despair, petty selfishness, and fruitless, hysterical derision, is borne out by their reaction to Broadbent's ride with the pig, and by the politics Father Dempsey, Matt Haffigan, Barney Doran, and Cornelius Doyle desire of their representative in parliament. As Cornelius Doyle says:

> Round about here, weve got the land at last; and we want no more Government meddlin. We want a new class o man in parliament: one dhat knows dhat the farmer's the real backbone o the country, n doesnt care a snap of his fingers for the shoutn o the riff-raff in the town, or for the foolishness of the laborers. (JBOI, 959)

The Garden City venture, therefore, must seem a preferable and beneficial alternative to present conditions of poverty, low wages, and unemployment, as Larry suggests by his contribution to the political discussion:

> If we cant have men of honor own the land, lets have men of ability. If we cant have men with ability, let us at least have men with capital. Anybody's better than Matt, who has neither honor, nor ability, nor capital, nor anything but mere brute labor and greed in him, Heaven help him! (JBOI, 963)

The audience slips, with Larry, into the dishonour of being used by "personally-minded men."

Since Shaw's object is to bring his audience to conviction of sin, then Larry Doyle's cynicism must be exposed for the falsehood it is. One means of achieving this end is to impugn the audience's sympathies for him. The audience probably regrets its sympathy for Larry as a consequence of his insensitive, cruel treatment of Nora Reilly. Though Nora is a product of the Irish mentality that Larry criticizes, the sentimental Irish "heiress," "who eats not wisely but too little" (JBOI, 955), she is a woman of feeling and grace. Shaw indicates the sympathetic response he desires of his audience with regard to Nora Reilly by his introductory remarks about her:

> The absence of any symptoms of coarseness or hardness or appetite in her, her comparative delicacy of manner and sensibility of apprehension, her thin hands and slender figure, her novel accent, with the caressing plaintive Irish melody of her speech, give her a charm which is all the more effective because, being untravelled, she is unconscious of it, and never dreams of deliberately dramatizing and exploiting it, as the Irishwoman in England does. (JBOI, 927)

Nora also gains the audience's approval by her ability to laugh at Broadbent, and manipulate him into further foolishness, as in the "drunk" scene at the Round Tower. That she never victimizes him for his absurdity, but treats him with tact and respect, enhances her stature in the eyes of the audience.

Though Larry is "quite unconscious of his cruelty" in saying to Nora, during their first conversation alone,

> Eighteen years is a devilish long time, Nora. Now if it had been eighteen minutes, or even eighteen months, we should be able to pick up the interrupted thread and chatter like two magpies. But as it is, I have nothing to say; and you seem to have less. (JBOI, 998)

the audience is very much conscious of his cruelty throughout the entire conversation. Nora loves Larry, and he is breaking her heart. After she pathetically accepts (or is swept away by) Broadbent, Larry, professing a very unconvincing regret at his treatment of her, compounds his crime against her. He tells her that "Nora Reilly was a person of very little consequence to me or anyone else outside this miserable little hole. But Mrs. Tom Broadbent will be a person of very considerable consequence indeed" (JBOI, 1009). When Nora condemns this discourteous, hardhearted conduct, and severs relations with him altogether, the audience must applaud her. The audience judges Larry, and finds him wanting on humane terms and on honourable terms. Larry descends in the estimation of the audience, just at the point when its estimation of Keegan is on the rise. It expects its representative to act honourably to a lady. Because censuring its surrogate is essentially censuring itself, Shaw prepares his audience for conviction of sin at this point where Larry crushes poor Nora. Larry's parting words, "Goodbye. Goodbye. Oh, thats so Irish! Irish both of us to the backbone: Irish, Irish, Iri--" (JBOI, 1010) betray his cynical attitude, and the heartlessness by which he is oblivious to human casualties. Its surrogate's sin is inhumanity and dishonour made possible by idealistic cynicism, and the audience stands tarred with the same brush.

The second means by which Shaw brings the audience to conviction of sin is by the exposure of the sham ideals that Larry's pseudo-realistic cynicism hides. Father Keegan, the instrument of the Life Force, conducts the exposure of Larry Doyle's idealism. Larry's cynical realism has led him to adopt the pernicious "gospel of efficiency," whereby he supports the plans of the Syndicate. Together, Broadbent, Doyle, and Father Keegan reveal the blighting rape of Rosscullen in which the exploitive, capitalistic Garden City venture will result.

Larry explains that "our syndicate has no conscience," so that "Haffigan doesnt matter much. He'll die presently" (JBOI, 1013). There is to be no role for such as Haffigan in the plans the Syndicate has for Rosscullen. Just as Larry has no conscience and no honour with respect to Nora, the Syndicate has no conscience and no honour with respect to the human consequences of its venture. That is the gospel of efficiency. Larry suggests that at least some constituents of Rosscullen will profit by the development: "It's the young men, the able men, that matter. . . . And let young Ireland take care that it doesnt share his [Haffigan's] fate, instead of making another empty grievance of it. Let your syndicate come--" (JBOI, 1014). But Father Keegan, with the vision of the Shavian realist to imagine things as they are and will be, reveals just who will profit by the venture:

> When the hotel becomes insolvent . . . your English business habits will secure the thorough efficiency of the liquidation. You will reorganize the scheme efficiently; you will liquidate its second bankruptcy efficiently . . . and when at last this poor desolate countryside becomes a busy mint for you . . . then no doubt your English and American shareholders will spend all the money for them very efficiently in shooting and hunting, in operations for cancer and appendicitis, in gluttony and gambling. (JBOI, 1017-18)

Peter Keegan perceives the inhumanity of the scheme, how it dishonours the Life Force.

Broadbent is fatuously unable to recognize the tragedy involved, the "only real tragedy," the "being used by personally-minded men for purposes you recognize to be base." Perhaps Larry Doyle recognizes the dishonour in his actions, the human consequences of them, for they are his actions as a member of the Syndicate; perhaps he does not. Either way, he is damnable for his involvement in it, and clearly his cynicism has led him there. Keegan's exposure of the "efficiency" of the plan brings the audience to its second conviction of sin, as it censures Larry, seeing his cynicism to be pernicious. Larry Doyle resists Keegan's call to the gospel of the Life Force, of humanity and honour. Instead, he opts for the gospel of efficiency, which has becomes his ideal through his cynical attitude. He does not realize that the only true progress is humanitarian, the evolution of the Life Force. He believes that the resurrection of Ireland lies with the efficient. He says that the Syndicate "will plan, and organize and find capital. . . . In the end it will grind the nonsense out of you, and grind strength and sense into you" (JBOI, 1014). That is, if it will have to do with you at all. The audience is again convicted of the sin of idealism.

Though Larry has the power to face the facts, to look life squarely in the face, he is not a Shavian realist because he does not possess the realistic imagination, enabling him to conceive of any other means than efficiency and the Syndicate to save Ireland. He follows no other course of action. Larry is not paralyzed by Irish dreaming, but by his cynicism. Broadbent's ability to act derives from a particular habit of mind whereby he is not jarred by the inconsistency between his ideals

and reality. Larry cannot act because he does not have the vision of the Life Force to help him reconcile reality to his ideals, so he is prevented from active furtherance of the Life Force. The passivity of his cynicism, however bitter, allows the foreign Syndicate to ravish Rosscullen. And, in terms of verbal action, Larry is relatively effective in thwarting the Life Force. It is his comment that arouses Keegan's discouragement as revealed by his remark, "I only make the hearts of my countrymen harder when I preach to them: the gates of hell still prevail against me" (JBOI, 1021).

Larry Doyle's cynicism indicates that he has the realistic perception necessary to become a Shavian realist. Because he clings tenaciously to his ideal of efficiency, ironically similar in its progressiveness to the movement of the Life Force, he remains an idealist. His realism sours into cynicism. Shaw flatters the audience that it too possesses Larry's clarity of perception, as well as his cynicism, but hopes that by bringing it to a conviction of sin by judging Larry accurately, it will convert to Peter Keegan's way of thinking. Another character, Broadbent, is held up to the audience as a second warning, and is also a means by which Shaw purges his audience of idealism.

At first glance, Broadbent seems the benign and foolish comic butt of the play. Closer analysis reveals a decidedly ambivalent character, one both genial and goodnatured, but also iniquitous and exploitive. Shaw describes him in the Preface as "infatuated in politics, hypnotized by . . . orators into an utter paralysis of his common sense, without moral delicacy or social tact. . . . [but] cheerful, robust, goodnatured, free from envy, and above all, a successful muddler through in business and love" (JBOI, 809). He is also a successful man of action,

able to turn ideas into realities, much as the Shavian realist does. In view of other remarks made in the Preface about British "muddling through" in Ireland and Egypt, however, one can hardly accept Broadbent as a fit instrument of the Life Force. Indeed, Shaw's passionate denunciation of British imperialism, of the people and methods employed to sustain the empire, stands as a fair warning to beware of the likes of Broadbent. Whatever his capacity for efficient and successful action, Broadbent is not a prototype of Undershaft. Broadbent is disqualified by his way of thinking, a way of thinking that, through him, Shaw wishes to eradicate in the audience. The essence of the Shavian realist is that he fulfills a vision of the imaginatively conceived future that will be an improvement upon the present reality. The Life Force must evolve for the betterment of mankind. Broadbent has pragmatic, capitalistic vision and ability, but that does not lead to the Shavian ideal of a feasible and desirable Utopia.

To discern the darker side of Broadbent's nature, it is necessary to understand that he suffers from compartmentalization of the mind.[3] Father Keegan understands that unconscious duplicity is Broadbent's complaint:

> There is a saying in the Scripture which runs--so far as the memory of an oldish man can carry the words--Let not the right side of your brain know what the left side doeth. I learnt at Oxford that this is the secret of Englishman's strange power of making the best of both worlds. (JBOI, 989)

His compartmentalized mind makes the exploitive Broadbent at the same time a character who is amiable, "cheerful, robust, goodnatured, free from envy," and Larry Doyle's affection for him confirms this. In a tribute to his friend, Larry says fondly:

> I never stop wondering at that blessed old head of yours with all its ideas in watertight compartments, and all the compartments impervious to anything that it doesnt suit you to understand. (JBOI, 913)

Though Broadbent's attractive goodnature does not deceive the audience into supposing him the just man of the piece, even before the villainy of his venture is unmasked in Act IV, his amiability does prevent it from taking full account of this divided consciousness, and the infamy it fosters. By liking him, though laughing at him, it is vulnerable to his complaint, compartmentalization of the mind.

A deleted passage from Act I of the play[4] clearly reveals the unattractive side of Broadbent's nature. Broadbent, discussing with Larry his plan for Rosscullen Garden City, asks: "Do you realize what an enormous force social enthusiasm is in the world--what a huge, thumping, solid money value it has?"[5] The insidiousness of his scheme is confirmed when he declares that he has "never sneered at Socialism" since his experience with a comparable speculative venture in Mexico, adding:

> It's a force--a real force--a bigger force than steam or electricity--lying there ready for any capitalist with brains enough to organize it. Well, why not organize it in Rosscullen? Why not create a Garden City there, not by paid labor, but by the enthusiasm of an imaginative warmhearted race?[6]

His compartmentalized mind then enables him to assert that "my scheme has nothing in common with the infamous Irish land system [another exploitive venture]. You dont understand. My scheme is a philanthropic one."[7] In the printed version of the play, however, Shaw does not reveal the exploitive, interested, and corrupt nature of Broadbent's abilities until Act IV, when Father Keegan berates his "efficient" plan. The emendation allows for the development of Broadbent's amiability, which is significant

to Shaw's manipulation of the audience response. Nevertheless, Broadbent is a capitalistic exploiter, which disqualifies him utterly from any role in the furtherance of the Life Force, though he believes himself to be so philanthropic and charitable. One must recognize that, while Undershaft exploits capitalism for the socialistic ends of the Life Force, and the benefit of society at large, Broadbent exploits socialism for the self-interested, capitalistic ends of the individual at the expense of society at large. For, as Father Keegan uncannily knows, the Garden City venture will disintegrate through bankruptcy after bankruptcy, with all profit falling to the Syndicate, and all loss to Rosscullen.

This, of course, is not to lose sight of Broadbent's comic role in the play. He is, it must be remembered, infatuated in politics, hypnotized by orators, and devoid of common sense, moral delicacy, or social tact. His absurdity is established at the outset of the play, when he notifies Hodson of his forthcoming trip.[8] Hodson is requested to pack a revolver, as though Broadbent were setting out for darkest Africa, while he is only going to Ireland. The credulity of the man in this, and in his dealings with Haffigan (whom even Hodson sees through), sets the pattern for his conduct throughout the rest of the play. No reader or spectator would fail to laugh heartily at Broadbent, to "swallow it eagerly," as Shaw tells us in the Preface the English audiences did. It is Broadbent's abundant mechanicalness in action and in speech, and in the very situations he creates, that makes him the comic character he is. Like all comic characters, Broadbent is unself-conscious and unaware of his own absurdity. Again, it is his compartmentalized mind that gives him this impervious quality that ensures that the audience will waste no sympathy on him.

Broadbent has a great ideal about English Liberalism, which he automatically considers to be the solution to all ills. After Larry's eloquent lament for the lot of the Irish in Act I, Broadbent sincerely comforts his partner with, "Never despair, Larry. There are great possibilities for Ireland. Home Rule will work wonders under English guidance" (JBOI, 911). And again, when Larry renews his nostalgic regrets, Broadbent offers this consolation: "Dont despair, Larry, old boy: things may look black; but there will be a great change after the next election" (JBOI, 919-20). Irrelevant to the ideas and feelings that Larry has expressed, Broadbent's responses are sincere, but mindless. All his political views, which he loses no opportunity to express, chugging along with the inevitability of a machine, appear similarly irrelevant--and laughable. Indeed, Broadbent is a sort of political machine, popping out platforms and platitudes with laughable regularity, undiminishing vigour, and benign indifference to changing circumstances. At the end of the play, when Keegan has revealed his dream to Broadbent and Larry, Broadbent's reaction is typical:

> (looking after him affectionately): What a regular old Church and State Tory he is! Hes a character: he'll be an attraction here. Really almost equal to Ruskin and Carlyle. . . . They improved my mind: they raised my tone enormously. I feel sincerely obliged to Keegan: he has made me feel a better man: distinctly better. (With sincere elevation.) I feel now as I never did before that I am right in devoting my life to the cause of Ireland. Come along and help me choose the site for the hotel. (JBOI, 1021-22)

Though not perhaps the funniest moment in the play, Broadbent's reaction to Keegan's very moving and profound speech underlines the intransigence of the Englishman's mind and the mechanicalness of his responses, particularly on political subjects.

Broadbent's conduct of his love affair with Nora Reilly also illustrates the mechanical quality of his actions. In this case, he virtually creates the comic situation himself by falling rather precipitately and implausibly in love with her at first sight. Having created a conventional romantic situation for himself, he proceeds to act automatically along conventional lines, and humour arises when Nora's equally conventional responses do not exactly coincide with his. Nora herself would be comic if the audience did not sympathize with this pathetic but dignified lady. In the "drunk" scene at the round tower, Broadbent is the amorous romantic, falling head over heels for Nora at the sound of her voice because "all the harps of Ireland" are in it. When his ardour meets first with her amusement, and then with her maidenly reserve, he is nevertheless undaunted:

> Nora [deeply offended]: . . . If a woman couldnt talk to a man for two minutes at their first meeting without being treated the way youre treating me, no decent woman would ever talk to a man at all.
>
> Broadbent: I dont understand that. I dont admit that. I am sincere; and my intentions are perfectly honorable. I think you will accept the fact that I'm an Englishman as a guarantee that I am not a man to act hastily or romantically, though I confess that your voice had such an extraordinary effect on me just now when you asked me so quaintly whether I was making love to you--
>
> Nora [flushing]: I never thought--
>
> Broadbent [quickly]: Of course you didnt. I'm not as stupid as that. But I couldnt bear your laughing at the feeling it gave me. You--[again struggling with a surge of emotion] you dont know what I--[he chokes a moment and then blurts with unnatural steadiness] Will you be my wife?
>
> Nora [promptly]: Deed I wont. The idea! [Looking at him more carefully.] Arra, come home, Mr. Broadbent; and get your sense back again. I think youre not accustomed to potcheen punch in the evening after your tea. (JBOI, 943-44)

Acting both hastily and romantically, though entirely unaware of his haste and romanticism, Broadbent proceeds as if he were programmed, and is consequently very humorous. So carried away is he by his romantic role that Nora's suggestion persuades him that indeed he must be drunk, while it is clear to the audience that he is no more drunk that he is in love, but rather "hypnotized . . . into an utter paralysis of his common sense." Broadbent's pursuit of Nora is amusing because he carries out his romantic role in total disregard of conflicting circumstances and a discouraging reception. He acts mechanically and irresistibly. Indeed, Broadbent successfully "muddles through" and wins Nora's hand. The effect is very funny with regard to Broadbent, but almost tragic for Nora. For though she acts conventionally, she is thoughtful in her action and sympathetic to the audience. She is steam-rollered by the Broadbent love-machine.

The purpose of Broadbent's comic role in the play is to ridicule conventional thinking in politics and in love. By laughing at Broadbent's Liberal platitudinizing and sentimentally romantic posturing, the audience withdraws its esteem from him, leaving him at most undignified. An undignified fool is rarely the image of the honourable man, though Broadbent claims an Englishman's honour. His antics thus constitute a counterpoint in the comic key to Larry Doyle's more overtly dishonourable conduct in politics and love. His idealism is judged foolish by the audience's laughter, as Larry's cynicism is judged offensive by their censure. The mechanical nature of his responses in love and politics, from whence arises the comedy, points up how foolish thoughtlessness can be. The spectator must beware of conventional idealism. Broadbent convinces the audience that, as it is, of course,

superior to that mindless buffoon Broadbent, it is equally above sharing his vacuous and undignified ideals.

Broadbent's amiability is of enormous importance to the development of audience response to the play. It conceals the darker side of his nature, as well as misleads the audience that his plans for Rosscullen are practical and beneficial. In Act II and Act III, Broadbent's enthusiasm for Ireland appears genuine, and interested only to the extent that Broadbent fancies himself to be one who "pitches in" and cannot help but personally profit on the side. In Act II, Broadbent's Baedekker fascination for local colour is engaging, if fatuous (JBOI, 932). His instantaneous capitulation at Nora's feet, while infinitely absurd, is still sincere, for how else could he believe himself drunk? In Act III, and at the beginning of Act IV, the drive with the pig testifies to his good will. His inability to tell the Rosscullen constituents what he feels about Home Rule "without using the language of hyperbole," and his insistence "on it with no uncertain voice," his anticipation of "the time when an Irish legislature shall arise once more on the emerald pasture of College Green" (JBOI, 968), is no indication of any conscious, hypocritical expectation of profiteering for the Syndicate. On the contrary, he is unquestionably sincere. His sincerity and unselfconsciousness are guaranteed by his compartmentalized mind.

For, as Broadbent himself attests, "If there is a vice I detest--or against which my whole public life has been a protest--it is the vice of hypocrisy. I would almost rather be inconsistent than insincere" (JBOI, 989). Broadbent's sincerity is likable, and despite his apparent foolishness, his plans for Rosscullen appear to the audience to be beneficial in intent. The plans are given practical plausibility

by his evident success in business and by Larry's support of the scheme. Shaw thus infects the audience with Broadbent's affliction, compartmentalization of the mind. For, though Broadbent is indubitably a fool in love and politics, the wisdom of his business scheme seems unquestionable. When Father Keegan reveals the true corruption of it, and of the man behind it, the audience must realize how serious an affliction it is, for it has allowed Broadbent's geniality to lure it into keeping his foolishness in the politics and love compartments, while accepting his wisdom in the business department. He has no more honour in business than he does in love or politics. Thus the audience comes to another conviction of sin, the sin of keeping the facts in separate compartments, thus allowing fools and exploiters to thrive.

Broadbent is undoubtedly a complex character, his complexity rooted in the ambivalence of the audience's relationship to him. On the one hand, it likes him for his good-nature, his appealing sentimentality, his ideals (however preposterous), and his indefatigable amiability. On the other hand, it patronizes his folly, and despises his exploitive motivations. It responds to him with its own compartmentalized mind. Properly viewed, the ambivalence is resolved. If the audience comes to conviction of sin, and recognizes Broadbent's iniquity, it will no longer have any positive feeling for him. Its opinion will be undivided. As Father Keegan says, "Every jest is an earnest in the womb of Time" (JBOI, 1021). Broadbent is no trifling witticism to Shaw, but rather a very serious joke. By the end of the play, we see that Broadbent's road may lead to financial success, but it is the road to dishonour as well. That he means well cannot redeem him, for "hell is paved with good intentions, not with bad ones. All men mean well."[9] The audience must damn him, and

damn that part of itself that foolishly supported him and took him lightly.

Once convicted of sin by its responses to Broadbent and Doyle, the audience is ready for inspiration from Father Keegan, who is the realist and preacher in the play. He is the voice and active instrument of the Life Force in the play, a man of right judgment and honour. Though no man of action, he makes a vital if small contribution in the effort to translate the dreams of the Life Force into actualities. For the service required by the Life Force of its instruments is simply the development of human potential further than it has hitherto been developed.[10] Father Keegan is an active instrument in two ways. First, he dares to act immorally (against ideals)[11] in accordance with his "madman's dream" or his realistic imagination. Second, he articulates the will of the Life Force, as it appears to his lights, thus spreading "the word," preaching within and without the play.

Father Keegan's willingness, his determination, to act immorally, when his convictions declare he must, is revealed by his defiance of the official Catholic Church dogma by administering absolution to a Hindoo. Furthermore, he came to conviction of sin through his sympathy with the Hindoo's philosophy. Hinduism suggests Creative Evolution insofar as its doctrine of transmigration of the soul parallels the transmigration of the Life Force from generation to generation, throughout eons, gradually perfecting itself toward godhead. Similarly, the Hindoo soul craves the acquisition of an entirely enlightened soul acceptable for entry into Nirvana. On the basis of this sympathy, Father Keegan preaches the doctrine of the Life Force, that man is not yet perfect, and that this world, in its imperfect state constitutes hell.

Because of his heresy, the Church "silenced" Father Keegan, but he perseveres dauntlessly. In telling the story of his contact with the Hindoo (JBOI, 990), Father Keegan relives for the audience the moment when he came to conviction of sin, when he realized that this world is hellish and sinful. Subsequently, he has been enlightened that the essential reality of life is that all life exists in a universal oneness, the Life Force. While his conviction of sin tells him that his world is hell, he does "not despair of finding heaven: it may be no farther off" (JBOI, 1019). This is the doctrine that he persists in preaching, in itself a daring, immoral act.

By preaching his beliefs to his former parishioners in Rosscullen, Father Keegan promotes, with however little success, the progress of the Evolutionary Appetite. In the beginning of Act II, he exhorts Patsy Farrell to respect the universal brotherhood of all living things:

> And when youre angry and tempted to lift your hand agen the donkey or stamp your foot on the little grasshopper, remember that the donkey's Pether Keegan's brother, and the grasshopper Pether Keegan's friend. And when youre tempted to throw a stone at a sinner or a curse at a beggar, remember that Pether Keegan is a worse sinner and a worse beggar, and keep the stone and the curse for him the next time you meet him. (JBOI, 926)

In Act IV, Father Keegan elaborates the philosophy of the Life Force as he is inspired by it. He eloquently articulates the nexus of his philosophy to Broadbent and Doyle in his description of what it is like in his dreams:

> In my dreams it is a country where the State is the Church and the Church the people: three in one and one in three. It is a commonwealth in which work is play and play is life: three in one and one in three. It is a temple in which the

> priest is the worshipper and the worshipper the worshipped: three in one and one in three. It is a godhead in which all life is human and all humanity divine: three in one and one in three. It is, in short, the dream of a madman. (JBOI, 1021)

Not only does Father Keegan preach the doctrine of the Life Force, but his preaching shows some results.

The influence of Father Keegan over at least some of his parishioners is significant. Shaw gives the following stage directions at the opening of Act IV,[12] when Barney Doran is regaling all assembled with the story of Broadbent's ride with the pig:

> There is a strong contrast of emotional atmosphere between the two sides of the room. Keegan is extraordinarily stern: no game of backgammon could possibly make a man's face so grim. Aunt Judy is quietly busy. Nora is trying to ignore Doran and attend to her game.
>
> On the other hand Doran is reeling in an ecstasy of mischievous mirth which has infected all his friends. They are screaming with laughter, doubled up, shouting, screeching, crying. (JBOI, 979-80)

In "danger, destruction, torment!" (JBOI, 982), Father Keegan cannot find the ingredients for merriment. The contrast between those who can and those who cannot reveals the impact of his preachings on at least two constituents of Rosscullen. Apparently, Nora and Aunt Judy do not find the famous ride in the motor the slightest bit funny either. Indeed, both ladies demand that Doran desist in his reports. Aunt Judy cannot be construed as a subscriber to Keegan's new philosophy, but her serious consideration of the whole incident, especially as regards personal injury to Doolan's grandmother, and to Broadbent himself, certainly echoes the tone of Keegan's sober reaction. Nora shares Aunt Judy's concern for the danger and destruction involved. Later, when Keegan relates how the Hindoo influenced him, and how he knows that "this earth

of ours must be hell, and that we are all here . . . to expiate crimes committed by us in a former existence" (JBOI, 991), she teasingly, but still sympathetically, expresses her understanding of at least the spirit of what he says, by saying, "I was too wicked in a former existence to play backgammon with a good man like you" (JBOI, 992). Clearly, Father Keegan has influence in Rosscullen, and is a man of honour, for he is treated always with respect, and Nora is one whom he affects more significantly by his example. Whether or not she accepts his philosophy, she respects it.

Father Keegan is an active instrument of the Life Force, in what he does and in what he says. Furthermore, he even goes so far as to reveal his truth to Broadbent, whom he almost instantly (with the acute perception of the Shavian realist) recognizes as an idealist (JBOI, 988). Father Keegan is not an impotent escapist, turning his back on the reality that includes Broadbents and Doyles, but a tireless soldier of the Life Force, who meets his opponents head on.

Father Keegan's ministry of the Life Force may be of limited efficacy in Rosscullen, but Shaw laboured ardently so that his ministry to the audience would be more successful. Because the audience must be brought to conviction of sin before it can be receptive to vocation by the Life Force, Shaw constructs a distinct distance between Father Keegan and the sympathies of the audience. This is not to say, however, that Father Keegan is not immediately likeable. When he first appears, he is chatting with a grasshopper about the condition of mankind. It is dusk, and the setting is very appealing in a romantically Irish way. Who could help but love this charming elderly gentleman "with the face of a young saint" (JBOI, 922)? But, the atmosphere is strangely at variance with

the sustained realism of Act I, so that Father Keegan's whimsical eccentricity attenuates the profundity and credibility of his conversation. Father Keegan engages the audience's indulgence, but captures serious consideration only after cautious reservations on its part. His capable authority over Patsy Farrell, and his solicitous handling of Nora Reilly, are reassuring, but he never quite sheds the mysterious aura of eccentricity. Like Nora, the audience's response is "incredulous" when Keegan utters such words as, "My way of joking is to tell the truth. It's the funniest joke in the world" (JBOI, 930). The audience's initial response to Keegan is sympathy, but at a safe distance.

Keegan's second appearance in the play dramatically accentuates the distance between him and the sympathies of the audience. The contrast of emotional atmosphere at the beginning of Act IV has already been noted. The hilarity of Barney Doran's tale of Broadbent's ride with the pig, attended as it is with bursts of uncontrollable laughter from most of those present, is calculated to infect the audience. Besides, the audience has learned to laugh at Broadbent's expense. Keegan's deeply stirring sobriety in the face of all this gaiety must thwart the audience's enjoyment. But, because the initial sympathetic response to Keegan is distanced, the disturbing effect of his stern presence in this scene may be held at bay at least long enough to enjoy the joke. In the initial response to Keegan, distance provides security from being wrong as Keegan may be wrong (or mad). In this second scene, the distance provides security from being wrong as Keegan's solemnity accuses. Reassured by foolish Broadbent's equally serious reaction to the incident, the audience widens its sympathetic distance from Keegan, a distance mitigated only by Nora's support of Keegan, and, later by his perception

of Broadbent's foolishness.

With the confrontation of Keegan and Broadbent, the distance between the audience and Keegan begins to narrow. Keegan's instantaneous identification of Broadbent as the fraud that he is alerts the audience to the credibility, however mysterious, of this singular man. At this point, the realist-saint begins to reveal his message. Keegan recognizes immediately the hypocritical vice of unconscious duplicity to which Broadbent is subject, and also perceives that it is Broadbent's compartmentalized mind that precludes his classification as a hypocrite proper. Keegan's realistic vision, which disrobes Broadbent of all exterior trappings so quickly, tends to refute previous suspicions of the priest's eccentric whimsicality and nonsense. His explanation of his alleged madness reveals two things: first, that the imaginative and metaphorical drift in the manner of his speech does not impugn his mental abilities in any degree, and second, how he came to conviction of sin. In terms of audience response, Father Keegan's lengthy explanation of part of his philosophy justifies some of the peculiar remarks and reactions that have been his. Furthermore, when thus given the floor, Father Keegan's poetic inclination is put into proper perspective. Hence, the reservations that had strengthened the audience's reluctance to sympathize with Keegan, are rendered baseless, and the audience is now free to close the gap. By telling how he came to conviction of sin, he indicates to the spectators by parable the first step that they must take to serve the Life Force. His true worth established, the persuasive and impelling force of his sermon is overwhelming.

In the final movement of Act IV, Father Keegan functions in two capacities. First, he continues to call the audience, as well as his

interlocutors, to conviction of sin. Second, he offers the honourable life of serving the Life Force to those who have, or who may in the future, come to conviction of sin. This inspiration he extends in the form of further revelation of the philosophy of the Life Force.

In his adroit comparison of Broadbent to an ass, he pinpoints why the "gospel of efficiency," to which Broadbent and Doyle subscribe, is a false and dishonourable gospel. He cites the ass's one fault as:

> That he wastes all his virtues--his efficiency, as you call it--in doing the will of his greedy masters instead of doing the will of Heaven that is in himself. He is efficient in the service of Mammon, mighty in mischief, skilful in ruin, heroic in destruction. But he comes to browse here without knowing that the soil his hoof touches is holy ground. Ireland, sir, for good or evil, is like no other place under heaven; and no man can touch its sod or breathe its air without becoming better or worse. It produces two kinds of men in strange perfection: saints and traitors. (JBOI, 1016)

Keegan thus identifies both Broadbent and Doyle with the dishonourable idealist who, it will be remembered, "is used by personally-minded men for purposes you recognize to be base." Ireland, in the larger scope of the play, represents the world, which is the condition of life. Keegan is telling Broadbent that man has two alternatives in life: to become better or worse, to be a realist or an idealist, to be honourable or dishonourable, to be saint or traitor. Man must discover that life is holy, as Ireland is "holy ground," and then he can only take the honourable alternative, service of the Life Force. Thus, in this speech, Keegan strives to convince the audience that the Syndicate's scheme, and what it represents, is reprehensible and wrong. Similarly, he suggests that any sympathies that it might have for the scheme, or like philosophies, are wrong and dishonourable. At the same time, he affirms the sanctity of life, the essential truth of the Life Force.

Father Keegan's subsequent castigation of the "efficient" scheme of the Syndicate reveals that realistic vision is the means of coming to conviction of sin, for it is thus that ideals can be stripped of the masks that hide ugly reality. That is why Keegan can see the Syndicate's plan for what it is. And until man knows what that ugly reality looks like, he cannot help the Life Force in its efforts to get rid of that ugliness and improve life. Keegan does not know what to change, much less what that change should be. But, ultimately, he does "not despair of finding heaven: it may be no farther off" than the holy ground of Ireland where he stands. He has simply to tear away the veil of idealism, or Shavian sin, to discover heaven.

Keegan is both the preacher of Shaw's sermon, and exemplar of his realistic saint and servant of the Life Force. While he fails to bring Larry or Broadbent to conviction of sin, or to inspire them with his call to the honourable life, there is indication that he might be more successful with the audience. Both Broadbent and Doyle pale beside the realism, logic, and honour of Keegan, so that however difficult the transition, Keegan must replace Larry as its model or audience-surrogate. By his inspired identification of Broadbent as both fool and exploiter and Doyle as both cynic and profiteer, Keegan establishes his undisputed eminence as the wise and perceptive man in the play. That accomplished, his poetry and truth must certainly woo the audience to his way of thinking. Of course, to fall in with eccentrics is difficult, but it really is the only honourable position left. It may be costly and dangerous in terms of ideals and vanity, but it is after all the only worthwhile way of life to pursue.

A certain amount of disillusionment ends the play. Broadbent

takes the curtain with enthusiastic anticipation of the Garden City redevelopment of Rosscullen. There is but faint hope that Keegan will discover heaven and realize his dream. Though Keegan may have converted the audience to his way of thinking, he offers it no course of action by which to bring it to life. Practical action is the domain of the idealists. Still, the dismal prognostication of the future of Rosscullen does not necessarily constitute a cynical or paradoxical diagnosis of the future of humanity. Shaw leaves the audience in the bitter key of self-recrimination, perhaps to emphasize that the service of the Life Force is never cheap, never without its dangers, though it is really the only "true joy in life," the only life worth living. In "Major Barbara," however, Shaw presents a more hopeful prognosis for Keegan's realist dream in the world of the idealists.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Dan H. Laurence, Shaw: An Exhibit (Austin: Humanities Research Center, Univ. of Texas, 1977), p. 1.

[2]Shaw, II, 523.

[3]Shaw expresses this view in a review of Boucicault's The Colleen Bawn, quoted by Martin Meisel, Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theater, pp. 269-70.

[4]Daniel J. Leary, "A Deleted Passage from Shaw's John Bull's Other Island," Bulletin of the New York Public Library, 74 (November 1970), 603.

[5]Leary, pp. 600-602.

[6]Leary, p. 600.

[7]Leary, p. 601.

[8]Margery Morgan, The Shavian Playground: An Exploration of the Art of George Bernard Shaw (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 122.

[9]Shaw, "Revolutionist's Handbook," II, 792.

[10]Gerald Weales, Religion in Modern English Drama (Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press, 1961), p. 61.

[11]In "The Quintessence of Ibsenism," Shaw describes the action of the realist as immoral because the morals of society reflect its ideals. The purpose of the realist, it will be remembered, is to destroy ideals.

[12]Morgan, p. 124. Ms. Morgan discusses the implications of this scene for the character of Keegan.

CHAPTER III

"MAJOR BARBARA"

> The dramatist knows that as long as he is teaching and saving his audience, he is as sure of their strained attention as a dentist is, or the Angel of the Annunciation. . . . he may use all the magic of art to make you forget the pain he causes you or to enhance the joy of the hope and courage he awakens. (Q, 145)

In "Major Barbara," Shaw is both teaching and saving his audience, in order to awaken in us the hope and courage to serve the Life Force more positively and effectively than he has through "John Bull's Other Island." "Major Barbara" takes the audience beyond conviction of sin to salvation, in a positive affirmation of his vitalist philosophy. The play itself is a contest of saviours. Major Barbara Undershaft of the Salvation Army undertakes to save her father, Andrew Undershaft, arms manufacturer, by her religion of "brave manhood and eternal glory in heaven." He, in turn, attempts to convert her to his religion of "money and guns." But the vital contest is between Shaw and his audience, and he does indeed use "all the magic of art" to convert his audience to the service of the Life Force. In "Major Barbara," Shaw's dramatic art brings us to that uncomfortable and sometimes painful feeling that he calls conviction of sin, but he awakens positive and hopeful feelings as well.

The many articles and chapters devoted to "Major Barbara" reach no clear consensus on a reading of the play. Therefore, before tracing Shaw's use of dramatic rhetorical devices to woo his audience around to his philosophy, my perspective on the play must be established. In the course of analyzing the play, themes emerge that form the lessons Shaw is

teaching and by which he saves. As always, Shaw deals with the relation of idealism to realism, but in this religious play, he develops realism as the means of Shavian salvation. Atonement, Shaw shows, is a trumpery game devised to propitiate idealism and evade reality, for the sake of conventional salvation. He also explores the force of realism, especially the fact of poverty, and its relation to necessity in order to demonstrate the nature and role of power. These themes or lessons bear on the action and characters in the play itself, as well as on the audience, because they pertain to salvation, the issue on which the play hinges.

In Act I, the Undershaft family gathers at the home of Lady Britomart Undershaft, Barbara's mother, where the children meet their father for the first time. The purpose of the meeting is to arrange future financial provisions for the Undershaft progeny, and one of the main interests of the play is the destiny and nature of the Undershaft inheritance. At this meeting, Barbara and her father challenge one another, setting the stage for the rest of the action. Act II, at the West Ham Salvation Army Shelter, comprises Barbara's effort to convert her father. Act III, at Perivale St. Andrews, Undershaft's armory, comprises his effort to convert his daughter, and in so doing, he determines the destiny of his legacy.[1]

Barbara's strategy of conversion to her faith is much the same as Shaw's to his: the strategy of dramatic example. She tries to teach her father the way of Christ by converting another and similar man, Bill Walker, so that the play has three educative processes. Barbara teaches Bill Walker, Undershaft teaches Barbara and Cusins, her fiance, and Shaw teaches the audience the means of salvation. Barbara attempts to save her father's soul at the same time as she undertakes Bill's salvation,

early in Act II. Her selection of Walker is opportune because Undershaft has much in common with him. Indeed, Shaw obliquely hints at this similarity in the Preface, where he writes, "What a man is depends on his character; but what he does, and what we think of what he does, depends on his circumstances. The characteristics that ruin a man in one class make him eminent in another" (MB, 46). To Barbara, of course, they both have the character of a sinner, but the similarity goes further.

Just as Bill Walker strikes a defenceless girl, Undershaft strikes a moral blow at Barbara when he purchases the Salvation Army. She is, at that moment, as defenceless before him as Jenny Hill before Walker's physical brutality. Both men openly defy Barbara's God. Generally speaking, Walker is guilty of brutality, self-interest, and arrogant indifference to others. Undershaft also puts his own needs before those of others. He recounts his life-story as follows:

> I was an east ender. I moralized and starved until one day I swore that I would be a full-fed free man at all costs; that nothing should stop me except a bullet, neither reason nor morals nor the lives of other men. I said "Thou shalt starve ere I starve"; and with that word I became free and great. (MB, 173)

Whatever wholesome conditions he provides at Perivale St. Andrews, they serve his interests first by guaranteeing him better workmen and bigger profits. The Undershaft motto, "Unashamed," and his insistence on the Armorer's Faith, a code of amorality in business, demonstrate the egotistical individualism he shares with Walker. His violence and brutality are made concrete in the cannon foundry, and highlighted by his satisfied response to the "good news from Manchuria" and to details of the greater efficacy of his guns in blowing up ever greater numbers of dummies. There is also a specific parallel between Undershaft and Walker. When Peter Shirley comments that Bill would sell himself to the devil for a pint

of beer, Bill replies: "[unashamed] Sao Aw would, mite, and often ev, cheerful" (MB, 138). Walker and Undershaft are both proud egotists, and their ways are both violent and self-interested. Walker differs from Undershaft, however, in that he uses his strength to put others down rather than himself up, and mistakenly attaches his sense of power and self-esteem to his ability to do so.

Barbara's objective is to lead Bill to a conviction of his sins. To bring his pride to heel, she questions his manliness by suggesting he is afraid to give his name, by willingly striking his name from her book, and by telling him his girl has thrown him over for another and a stronger man. Bill "writhes with an agonizing return of his new and alarming symptoms" (MB, 109) of conviction of sin when Jenny Hill forgives him for striking her. Barbara succeeds in convicting him of the sins of brutality and pride, giving him a feeling of "unbearable moral inferiority" (MB, 44). Bill's conviction of sin is just, because his pride and self-esteem should prevent him from striking a defenceless woman. But Barbara sees Bill's pride as the cause of his downfall, rather than the seed of his redemption, and now tries to convert him to her faith in passivity and humility. Though at heart Walker is a realist, albeit a rude and misguided one, he is now entangled in an idealist's web. While he cannot respond to Barbara's ideals of humility and passivity, because they are foreign to his proud, assertive, and active nature, he is naturally inclined to punish his bad self, in order to make his good self feel virtuous, by seeking atonement. Bill tries to take his salvation on the chin, so to speak, as Shaw explains in the Preface:

> Thus Bill Walker, in my play, having assaulted the Salvation Lass, presently finds himself overwhelmed with an intolerable conviction of sin under the skilled treatment of Barbara. Straightway he begins to try to unassault the lass and deruffianize his deed, first by getting punished for it in kind, and, when that relief is denied him, by fining himself a pound to compensate the girl. He is foiled both ways. He finds the Salvation Army as inexorable as fact itself. . . . it leaves him no means of salvation except ceasing to be a ruffian. (MB, 43)

Bill does not really want the salvation Barbara offers, he wants to recover his self-esteem and manliness. Finding himself embroiled in Barbara's ideals through the conviction of sin to which she has quite justly led him, Bill devises his strategies of atonement in order to circumvent her unyielding ideals. Barbara, however, is too many for him. Barbara's Christianity is not debased by "Crosstianity," with its hypocritically idealized brutality (MB, 44), and she holds firm to her ideals. She will not concede him his salvation on the basis of atonement. At this point, the realist is foiled by the idealist, but only because he mistook the pitch of her idealism, not because her idealism is in the right.

Barbara's effort to save Walker is aborted by the combined influence of Cusins and Undershaft. Just as Barbara has overwhelmed Walker with a conviction of sin, Cusins appears, and with the sound of his drum, Bill "escapes from the spell" (MB, 113) of conviction of sin that Barbara has cast on him. Furthermore, Cusins opposes Barbara when he supports Walker's plan to seek atonement at the hand of Todger Fairmile. When the plan fails, and Walker returns to the Shelter still unshriven, Undershaft supports his second attempt to win atonement. Barbara refuses Bill's penance money because "the Army is not to be bought" (MB, 127), but Undershaft interferes: "Come, Barbara! you could do a great deal of

good with a hundred pounds. If you will set this gentleman's mind at ease by taking his pound, I will give the other ninety-nine" (MB, 128).

Though Barbara refuses Undershaft's offer, Mrs. Baines does accept his far more generous gift of five thousand pounds. As Bill watches Undershaft buy off the Army, he perceives that the apparently self-interested maker of violent weapons can purchase his "salvation," and the approval of the Salvation Army, without sacrificing his pride or manliness. His belief in the validity of atonement is confirmed, and all hope of Walker's conversion to Barbara's Christian humility is lost. "Wot prawce selvytion nah?" (MB, 132) he asks. As long as Bill thinks salvation is just a question of the penance price, a type of self-mortification, he despairs of winning it because his pound is not enough. But, because Bill equates salvation with the pride and self-esteem he derives from a sense of victory over others, he becomes "salvationproof" (MB, 138) when he learns that a "saved" man has stolen his pound. His sense of superiority returns when he sees Barbara and her principles defeated by Snobby Price and Undershaft. His conviction of sin, unfortunately, is reversed, because he no longer feels morally inferior to Barbara. So puffed up is he that he can extravagantly disdain her offer to repay him his pound. Now the idealist is foiled by the realist turned cynic, but only because she mistook the root of his sinfulness, not because he is morally in the right.

Barbara's failure to convert Bill Walker has several implications. It foreshadows her failure to convert Undershaft to her religion. Cusins' role in her defeat suggests that his allegiance is suspect, and that he might desert his Major again in battles to come. Mrs. Baines's acceptance of atonement money, against Barbara's principles, bespeaks the force of

necessity, for without it the Shelter must close. Undershaft's purchase of the Army suggests the meaninglessness of Barbara's ideals, for he proves that the world is ruled by power and necessity, not by highflown ideals. The conversion of Rummy Mitchens and Snobby Price, made for the sake of bread and milk, are no less spiritually false and irrelevant than the salvation Barbara would deny Bodger and Undershaft in exchange for their munificent endowment of the Army. Bill Walker points this fact out to Barbara, when, discovering Price's theft, he asks Shirley in her hearing, "Tell us, aol menn, wot o'clock this mawnin was it wen im as they call Snobby Prawce was sived?" (MB, 137). Bill's question, "Wot prawce selvytion nah?" emphasizes that these exchanges, in fact made out of necessity, but ostensibly made in the name of spiritual salvation, are as meaningless as those made in pursuit of atonement. Salvation does have its price, when necessity enters the forum, but it is a temporal salvation only that is bought and sold. The Salvation Army, in its necessity, is to Undershaft what Price and Mitchens, in their necessity, are to the Salvation Army. Necessity, and the power to satisfy its demands, are forces with which Barbara's spiritual power cannot compete, and this she must come to realize. But Barbara's failure to convert Bill implies something more about the nature of power than its ability to ensure temporal salvation. Those who are both wicked and independent, like Bill Walker, have only disdain for spiritual salvation. Barbara's ideals of passivity and humility, moreover, cannot make them feel the lack of it. An enormous spiritual power, neither humble nor passive, must be unleashed to bring them to conviction of sin and true salvation. This kind of salvation is not so easily managed as temporal salvation.

Undershaft's strategy to convert Barbara, and to teach her his

religion, is much more complex than hers, though like her, he approaches his task through a third person, her fiance, Adolphus Cusins. Cusins and Barbara appeal to Undershaft because they are original and unconventional. He tells Cusins, "I am a millionaire; you are a poet; Barbara is a savior of souls. What have we three to do with the common mob of slaves and idolators?" But Cusins replies that "Barbara is in love with the common people. So am I" (MB, 120-21). Barbara and Cusins do not see themselves as individualists in the same sense that Undershaft and Walker are. They think they are independent young Titans, but not, however, egotistical, self-interested, or indifferent to others. Rather, they see themselves as humble, self-sacrificing pacifists, devoted to the welfare of all, Barbara perhaps more than Cusins. Undershaft, on the other hand, sees more of his willful pride in them than they admit, especially in Cusins. Indeed, Cusins shows a sympathy for Undershaft's philosophy when he explains to Lomax the meaning of the armorer's statement, "There is only one true morality for every man; but every man has not the same true morality" (MB, 90). Cusins and Undershaft are more alike than otherwise, and the similarity between the two men in Barbara's life helps to clarify Cusins' role in the play.

Cusins does not cooperate with Lady Britomart's plans that he remain behind to join her in regular prayers while all the others have followed Barbara into the drawing room for a Salvation Army service. Not only does he refuse her as Undershaft certainly would, but he justifies his refusal with the words of the prayer book. This reasoning is reminiscent of Lady Britomart's description of her husband, earlier in the scene, as doing "every perverse and wicked thing on principle. . . . Always clever and unanswerable when he was defending nonsense and

wickedness" (MB, 75). Lady Britomart also draws attention to Cusins' rather equivocal position vis-à-vis the Salvation Army, that he is less caught up by its Christian ideals than by its idealistic Major. Much the same might be said of Undershaft's sudden interest in the Army. Cusins does not demur, but rather replies, "Dont tell on me" (MB, 93).

In Act II, at the West Ham Shelter, Undershaft quickly focuses on the ambivalent nature of Cusins' vocation for the Salvation Army. Unwittingly, Cusins reveals himself to be a more receptive proselyte than Barbara, from Undershaft's point of view, when he admits that he is not precisely a convert to the Army. He tells Undershaft that he is a "collector of religions" and can believe in them all. Notably, after he hears Undershaft describe his millionaire's religion, in which the necessaries are money and gunpowder, Cusins suggests that Barbara, not himself, will unhesitatingly reject this creed. Concentrating on the distance between Cusins and Barbara idealistically, and on the similarity between himself and the professor of Greek, Undershaft parries with a warning to him that "She will find out that that drum of yours is hollow" (MB, 116). Incidentally forecasting the interference Cusins' drum will run between Barbara and her convert, Undershaft is rather craftily attempting to make Cusins see that they are much on the same footing when it comes to Barbara.

Cusins' character presents something of an enigma. He protests that he <u>is</u> a sincere salvationist, especially appreciating the Army's enthusiasm and egalitarianism. He repudiates Undershaft's religion, quoting Euripides, and insists that money and guns may be facts of life, but they can save no one. Salvation, he tells Undershaft, is consciousness of life, its wisdom, grace, and loveliness. Cusins prefers to ignore the

sordid facts of life in favour of concentrating on the wise, the free, and the beautiful. In short, he is an idealist, and an impossiblist. But one must not forget his equivocation over Barbara's Christian ideals, particularly his opposition to her over Bill Walker. For Cusins is also an active man: he likes vitality and fanfare, and sympathizes with Walker's inclination to action. Intellectually an idealist, Cusins is far more pragmatic in action. Aware of this, Undershaft sets up Cusins for a fall from his splendid idealism. He coaxes him to articulate his ideals, then very shortly brings him face to face with the facts Cusins chooses to ignore. When the armorer applies the necessity to support loveliness to the necessity to support Barbara as her husband-to-be, Cusins performs, at this application to real circumstances, something of a volte face. When it comes to Barbara, he claims he will have his own way, because, as he says, "whenever I feel that I must have anything, I get it, sooner or later" (MB, 118). Understanding that it is but a short step from pragmatism to realism, Undershaft baits his hook for the likelier fish. He establishes that, like himself, Cusins is thoroughly unscrupulous when it comes to keeping Barbara. He shows Cusins that his idealism is not so pristine after all.

As Undershaft's task is to convert Barbara to the religion of money and guns, it will be useful at this point to digress for the purpose of explaining that religion. Undershaft believes that "you must first acquire money enough for a decent life, and power enough to be your own master" (MB, 118). Money provides control over the temporal needs of life. Guns, or power, enable man to protect and pursue his ideals of "Honour, justice, truth, love, mercy, and so forth" (MB, 116) because power keeps him free from slavery to purposes other than his own. While

Barbara agrees that the temporal needs of life must be met, she does not see that temporal comfort is a precondition of spiritual salvation. Thus, what she must be converted to is the necessity of gunpowder. For not only is power necessary to protect the well-being of life, but it is also the means of ensuring provision of that well-being. Money and power are inextricably bound together, but power is not solely derived from money. Indeed, both are outgrowths of realism, for pragmatic realism makes man clever enough to win riches, and only true knowledge of the facts of life affords him the insight to escape slavery to ideals.

Early in the play, Undershaft describes his morality to his family:

> I am not one of those men who keep their morals and their business in water-tight compartments. . . . Your Christianity, which enjoins you to resist not evil, and to turn the other cheek, would make me a bankrupt. My morality--my religion--must have a place for cannons and torpedoes in it. (MB, 89-90)

What he advocates is the gospel of realism. Therefore, why pretend the facts of his livelihood do not exist on a moral plane? In other words, his ideals have a healthy admixture of the facts in them. More precisely than converting Barbara to money and guns, he wants to convert her to his gospel of reality. Reality, he emphasizes, with his description of fragmented dummies, is "explosively" brutal. He implies that facing reality squarely conveys to the realist that power over himself, and in spite of others, that a cannon conveys to the gunner. It takes courage to face the facts, and to seize power over oneself and over life. Humility and passivity only dissipate that courage.

Undershaft proclaims that Barbara's "inspiration comes from within herself. . . . It is the Undershaft inheritance. . . . She shall

make my converts and preach my gospel . . . money and gunpowder. Freedom and power. Command of life and command of death" (MB, 120). Within the circumstances of her life, the only way for Barbara to effectively face the facts of life is to take over the guns. Her choice is reality with guns, or idealistic romance without them. Gunpowder represents power generally, and is the specific means of power available to Barbara. Facing the facts gives man the command of life and the command of death in the sense that only then is he able to anticipate both temporal and spiritual needs accurately, and only then is he assured of a spiritual vitality unhampered by the despair of slavery to other men's interests. Ironically, and also appropriately, guns both protect and destroy life.[2] Without the power to be free, man faces spiritual death.

Undershaft seems to assume Cusins' conversion when he declares, "We three must stand together above the common people: how else can we help their children to climb up beside us? Barbara must belong to us, not to the Salvation Army" (MB, 121). Cusins understands this new religion of money and gunpowder, and has been confronted with his own sometimes rather unscrupulous pragmatism. Nevertheless, he remains adamantly idealistic. He is "revolted," then "overwhelmed" (MB, 122-23) by Undershaft's unscrupulousness when it comes to winning Barbara. "Genuine unselfishness," the armorer tells her, "is capable of anything" (MB, 124). In the light of what Undershaft has just told him about the usefulness of the "Church of the poor" to the purposes of the rich, Cusins perceives that under the guise of unselfishness, Undershaft means to purchase the Army for the purpose of winning Barbara. Thus, he shows Cusins that the unscrupulousness they share directly undermines the ideals Cusins professes to share with Barbara. So Cusins comes under

Undershaft's "spell." He is forced to bring his own pragmatic "conversion," made to win Barbara, under the scrutiny of his erstwhile idealism. Horrified by what the scrutiny tells him of himself, he blames Undershaft, and condemns him as, "Mephistopheles! Machiavelli!" (MB, 124). The devil, being both perpetrator of evil and the tempter, Cusins therefore finds Undershaft's code tempting (answering his pragmatic inclinations), and wicked (the response of his idealism). Only because he is so idealistic does Cusins see Undershaft as a wickedly pragmatic Machiavelli. He cannot conceive of virtuous pragmatism, or realistic ideals. Throughout the remainder of Act II, however, Cusins does not oppose Undershaft, and, more importantly, does not support or comfort Barbara. Undershaft makes him feel guilty of his pragmatism, which Cusins, clinging to his ideals, considers sinful. Undershaft also deflates those ideals, for Cusins now doubts their viability and strength in a contest with Undershaft's powerful pragmatism. Undershaft successfully neutralizes Barbara's greatest and ablest ally. He may now concentrate fully on her.

To ready Barbara to shoulder his money and guns, Undershaft must convert her to his gospel of reality. His method is the same as her method with Bill Walker: he brings her to a conviction of sin, the sin of not facing reality, of living on dreams and ideals. Barbara believes that the way to fight wickedness in the world is to convert sinners to love, humility, and passivity. She believes that the only solace for life's hardships is hope of felicity in heaven, won by a humble and Christian life on earth. She believes that no man is thoroughly wicked, and that through belief in God and conviction of sin, the wayward will forgo his wicked ways. Though Barbara cannot see, as the audience and Undershaft do, that she herself is far from passive and humble, she

preaches humility and submission to God's will as the means of salvation to her flock. At the same time, she has found, not surprisingly, that the struggle to assist her converts on the temporal level impedes her work on the spiritual level: "I am getting at last to think more of the collection than of the people's souls. And what are those hatfuls of pence and halfpence? We want thousands! . . . I want to convert people, not to be always begging for the Army in a way I'd die sooner than beg for myself" (MB, 124). To a certain extent, Barbara's true spirit emerges here as she reluctantly faces one reality: the necessity of money takes priority over spiritual concerns.

Undershaft's goal is to demonstrate to Barbara that it is not just unfortunate that temporal demands obscure spiritual aims, but necessary that they do, and right that they do. He also wants to awaken in her a recognition of her true fighting spirit in order that she assert her will and pride in pursuit of a better temporal as well as spiritual world. In Act II, all Undershaft accomplishes in his effort to convert Barbara is her realization that <u>in fact</u> temporal needs do come first. With Mrs. Baines's acceptance of his cheque, together with Bodger's contribution--gifts of atonement from two unrepentant sinners--Undershaft is able to parade in front of Barbara this "fact" of money. Despite Mrs. Baines's rationalizations, egged on by Undershaft, Barbara knows that Bodger "wants to send his cheque down to buy us, and go on being as wicked as ever" (MB, 132). But the fact is, the Army must have the money to survive, and Barbara cannot escape it.

Undershaft's purchase of the Army has a cataclysmic effect on Barbara's spirit. It is only too apparent now what is the price of salvation: at the Shelter, it is whatever amount of money it takes to

dispel physical want. When Barbara's heart is breaking and she cries out, "Drunkeness and Murder! My God: why hast thou forsaken me?" (MB, 136), she expresses an incredulous recognition that temporal needs do take precedence over spiritual aims. The force of Barbara's disillusionment is proportionate to the force of necessity in the real world, and a measure of the power it will be necessary for her to command in order to manage both the physical and spiritual dimensions of her vocation. It is also proportionate to the power behind those other realities, drunkeness and brutality, which together form a force so strong that though she pitted all her strength against it, she finds she is but a pawn in its game. "You came," she says to Undershaft, "and shewed me that I was in the power of Bodger and Undershaft" (MB, 170). Barbara's idealism has been strong enough to blind her to the facts she confronted every day, and only such a totally devastating revelation could successfully shake it.

Cusins' desertion of Barbara is appropriate, cruel though it seems. Dramatically, Barbara must come to a conviction of the sin of ignoring reality on her own, and unprotected. Cusins cannot be her proxy in this matter. The brutality of the facts must devastate her idealism as well as his. Seen as a unit, Barbara and Cusins are comprised of spirit (Barbara), and intellect (Cusins). Intellect, we have seen, is not unacquainted with pragmatism, and not impervious to persuasion. Spirit, however, will admit no compromise, as in Barbara's efforts to win Bill Walker's soul she would accept no conditions. While Cusins is receptive to reason, Barbara must be inspired. Her disillusionment cast her into a spiritual vaccuum, and of necessity her response is despair. On the other hand, Cusins' shaken idealism prompts his pragmatism to find

him a way out of Doubting Castle so he may elude the Giant Despair. Barbara's dark night of the soul differs entirely from Cusins'.

At the outset of Act III, we find Barbara grieving because she has discovered that rather than being in the power of God, she has been in the power of the powerful. Cusins, too, is in the power of the powerful--possessed by Undershaft. Both of them, in their own ways, have faced the fact that money comes first, and that money is the domain of the powerful, in this case, the domain of Undershaft. They are in that uncomfortable state of mind that betrays an unconscious conviction of sin, but they have still not adopted the religion of money and guns. Cusins' moral basis is wrecked, his convictions routed, his soul purchased, but he still maintains that Undershaft must win him on the "holier ground" of "larger loves and diviner dreams" (MB, 142). Barbara has given up on Walker's conversion, indeed, on the Salvation Army itself, and mourns her vanquished ideals. Inspiration is flagging and intellect baffled. As in Act II, Undershaft begins his conversion of Barbara to his religion by approaching Cusins. Cusins anticipates him by confessing yet another characteristic that they share. Technically, Cusins is a foundling, and eligible for the Undershaft inheritance. The legacy of the armorer's millions is the legacy of his gospel of realism made concrete. Thus, by his admission, Cusins claims his soul to be shriven of idealism and ready for conversion. But he demands that Undershaft bridge the "abyss of moral horror" (MB, 165) between himself and Cusins. He must reconcile Cusins' ideals to his realism.

In a letter to Gilbert Murray, Shaw makes the following comments about the character of Cusins:

> I want to get Cusins beyond the point of wanting power. . . . Undershaft is a fly on the wheel; but Cusins would not make the mistake of imagining that he could be anything else. The fascination that draws him is the fascination of reality, or rather--for it is hardly a fascination--the impossibility of refusing to put his hand to Undershaft's plough, which is at all events doing something, when the alternative is to hold aloof in a superior attitude and beat the air with words. To use your metaphor of getting his hand on the lever, his choice lies, not between going with Undershaft or not going with him but between standing on the footplate at work, and merely sitting in a first class carriage reading Ruskin & explaining what a low dog the driver is and how steam is ruining the country.[3]

Shaw confirms that Cusins' choice, indeed the choice of all idealists, is not really between a real, active life and a life pursuing ideals, but between a real, active life and a Philistine life of conventional action, however it may be fraught with idealistic agonizing. By definition, an ideal life is unattainable, so there is no such thing as an ideal course of action. Though there may be an idealist attitude to life, and a Philistine attitude to life, all activity is Philistine or realist. Those who agonize are in what Shaw calls the "Impossibilist position."

Keeping in mind Cusins' history of duplicity in matters of conversion, and his pragmatism, one must be suspicious of his readiness to shoulder the Undershaft mantle. Cusins is vulnerable to Philistine compartmentalization of the mind, keeping his ideals separate from the exigencies of the real world and his own unquenchable thirst for action. His Impossibilism becomes evident when he rejects Undershaft's Armorer's Faith. A code of amorality, it corresponds to the belief Undershaft shares with Barbara that "There are neither good men nor scoundrels: there are just children of one Father" (MB, 90). Undershaft therefore extends his means of salvation, power, to whosoever asks, because while he "cannot make courage and conviction," he "will take an order from a

good man as cheerfully as from a bad one" (MB, 169). Courage and conviction come from the will of which he is a part, and his mission is to convert all men to the power of realizing their courage and their convictions, to convert them from passivity and humility to action and dignity. But Cusins proclaims, on moral grounds, that he will discriminate in the sale of guns as to just who will buy, and who not. In this rejection, Cusins reveals the idealism he cherishes despite his recent recognition of reality. His morality does not yet have a place for cannons and torpedoes in it.

Neither Barbara nor Cusins understands the saving grace of the power Undershaft extends to his converts, and that there must be a temporal salvation before spiritual salvation is possible. Rather disgusted with their obstinacy, Undershaft expostulates: "You have made for yourself something that you call a morality or a religion or what not. It doesnt fit the facts. Well, scrap it. Scrap it and get one that does fit" (MB, 170-71). Barbara does not distinguish between the means of spiritual salvation, and the price of satisfying physical want, the means of temporal salvation. Though a life free from want does not guarantee spiritual salvation, it is a necessary condition of it for most people. Undershaft explains precisely how his power acts as a saving grace, specifically for Barbara herself. He claims that he saved Barbara:

> Food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, respectability, and children. Nothing can lift those seven millstones from Man's neck but money; and the spirit cannot soar until the millstones are lifted. I lifted them from your spirit. I enabled Barbara to become Major Barbara; and I saved her from the crime of poverty. (MB, 172)

Because Undershaft has "no other means of conveying [his] ideas" (MB, 173), he moves from this lesson on true salvation to a full sermon on the means

of salvation, and his text is "Poverty is Crime."

The specific reason for poverty, he asserts, is the lack of money, and from poverty spring all of society's ills. Furthermore, he claims that the means of true salvation is money. "It is cheap work," he says, "converting starving men with a Bible in one hand and a slice of bread in the other" (MB, 173), emphasizing to Barbara what has been apparent to the audience from the outset of Act II. Her converts are no more true converts to her ideals than the untried residents of Perivale St. Andrews. They are only saved, and somewhat meagrely, in body. "Try your hand on my men," Undershaft challenges, "their souls are hungry because their bodies are full" (MB, 173). Poverty stands between Barbara and her converts, the poverty of the Salvation Army as much as the poverty of her somewhat dubious converts. Poverty is the fact that makes her ideals dreams, and dreams only. To get rid of poverty, Undershaft claims, one must be powerful, willful enough to kill it:

> I was an east ender. I moralized and starved until one day I swore that I would be a full-fed free man at all costs; that nothing should stop me except a bullet, neither reason nor morals nor the lives of other men. I said "Thou shalt starve ere I starve"; and with that word I became free and great. I was a dangerous man until I had my will. (MB, 173)

Egotistical self-assertion is the first step toward Undershaft's salvation. If one fights the power of poverty passively and humbly, by Barbara's Christian ideals, one will end up finally in its power, its slave, just as Barbara has found herself in the power of Bodger and Undershaft, their slave, fulfilling their purposes rather than her own.

Undershaft's final thrust, a sally that coalesces his arguments, is that only by facing the facts, however sordid and unpleasant, and by actively seizing power, can man turn his dreams, his ideals, into facts

themselves:

> Ought! ought! ought! ought! ought! Are you going to spend your life saying ought, like the rest of our moralists? Turn your oughts into shalls, man. Come and make explosives with me. Whatever can blow men up can blow society up. The history of the world is the history of those who had courage enough to embrace this truth. (MB, 175)

Undershaft scuttles all Cusins' ideals, pity, love, forgiveness, and peace, as inconsistent with the facts, and therefore false ideals. Pity thrives on misery, and love equally, when it excludes the powerful and the free. If Cusins' only argument against taking power is his pity and love for the underdog, then true pity and love would command him to seize that power for the sake of the underdog's benefit. As for his hatred of war, Undershaft's answer, that "Hatred is the coward's revenge for being intimidated" (MB, 178), only proves his claim that if Cusins does not seize the power of war, he will remain the slave of war, and thus a panderer to it. "Dare you make war on war?" (MB, 178), Undershaft demands of Cusins. Undershaft challenges Cusins to make a morality that comprehends both reality and his ideals, to take pride in action for his ideals, rather than submitting humbly to harsh reality, or playing the hopeless, cynical game of both ends against the middle, keeping idealism and reality in separate courts.

With Cusins, Undershaft uses the appeal of reason to his intellect, the appeal of reality to pragmatism, and the appeal of power to his active energy. But, rather than convert to Undershaft's faith, Cusins pragmatically sets aside his ideals to assume the power of the Undershaft inheritance in order to serve his ideals covertly. He does not recognize that Undershaft's pride and realistic action are the only means of achieving those ideals. Cusins hopes to keep his ideals unsullied

by Undershaft's brute reality. His desire thus to cheat reality is rooted in the cynicism that gives rise to his statement, "What is all human conduct but the daily and hourly sale of our souls for trifles?" (MB, 180). His idealism is intact when he informs Barbara of the reasons for his acceptance of the Undershaft legacy:

> What I am now selling it for is neither money nor position nor comfort, but for reality and for power. . . . I want to make power for the world. . . . I want a power simple enough for common men to use, yet strong enough to force the intellectual oligarchy to use its genius for the general good. (MB, 180-81)

Cusins declares he must "make war on war" (MB, 182), but despite his realistic rationalizations, he still feels that he is compromising with wickedness, selling his soul and ideals for power with resigned cynicism. He assumes that because of his choice, Barbara will reject him.

Like Cusins, Barbara hankers for her idealistic romance without any guns in it, wanting to "have the wings of a dove and fly away to heaven!" as she has "escaped from the world into a paradise of enthusiasm and prayer and soul saving." But, she faces the fact that "the moment our money ran short, it all came back to Bodger" (MB, 182). Reality has been a disappointment to Barbara, but she, unlike Cusins, refuses to perpetuate her disappointment in cynicism and duplicity. She needs a new morality that fits both the facts and her ideals, and she condemns Cusins for keeping his ideals separate from his newly adopted realism:

> Barbara. Turning our backs on Bodger and Undershaft is turning our backs on life.
>
> Cusins. I thought you were determined to turn your back on the wicked side of life.
>
> Barbara. There is no wicked side: life is all one. And I never wanted to shirk my share in whatever evil must be

> endured, whether it be sin or suffering. I wish I could cure you of middle-class ideas, Dolly. (MB, 183)

Barbara saves Cusins by bringing him to a second conviction of the Shavian sin of idealism, and keeping his ideals and the facts in water-tight compartments. She converts to Undershaft's gospel of reality by her admission of her former error: "it all came back to Bodger: it was he who saved our people: he, and the Prince of Darkness, my papa" (MB, 182). She testifies to her conversion to a life of realistic action by spurning the alternative life of "patronizing people who are not so lucky" (MB, 177), a future "in an artistic drawing room, with you reading the reviews in one corner, and I in the other at the piano, playing Schumann: both very superior persons and neither of us a bit of use" (MB, 183). She readily abandons her Christian ideal of humility. "Let God's work be done," she says,

> for its own sake: the work he had to create us to do because it cannot be done except by living men and women. When I die, let him be in my debt; and let me forgive him as becomes a woman of my rank. (MB, 184)

Barbara saves Cusins, and takes up her own salvation, by her faith that only in realism are ideals realized. She cures Cusins of his "middle-class ideas" by convincing him that "the way of life lies through the factory of death" (MB, 184). She recognizes that the only way to keep her ideal of spiritual salvation alive is through Undershaft's religion of money and guns, not passively and humbly, but actively and proudly. Perivale St. Andrews, she realizes, "is where salvation is really wanted." There there are hundreds of "human souls to be saved" not weak souls in starved bodies" (MB, 183-84), but healthy, full-fed sinners, like Bill Walker, ripe for conviction of sin and salvation, "through the raising of

hell to heaven and of man to God, through the unveiling of an eternal light in the Valley of The Shadow" (MB, 184).

On the face of it, Undershaft wins the contest of saviours, for he succeeds in teaching his daughter his gospel, and converting her to his religion of reality and power. But Barbara loses very little in the loss of her old faith and her discovery of a new one. Indeed, she brings to Undershaft's religion her concern with what comes after physical salvation and conversion to power and dignity in the real world of the facts. The end of the play embodies a hope that she will take his converts and inspire them with something more, give them a direction in which to put their new found power and well-being to good use. Undershaft confesses that he "cannot make courage and conviction," but Barbara can certainly inspire whatever courage and conviction there is to do "God's work for its own sake," as her successes in the Salvation Army prophesy.

At the beginning of the play, Barbara and Undershaft differ not so much as to the value and necessity of salvation, of "brave manhood and eternal glory," as to the means of that salvation. To Barbara, the means of salvation are humility and submission to Providence. To Undershaft, the means are the recognition of the dignity that is life's proud legacy, and willful action to ensure and develop that legacy. Barbara discovers that it is man's nature, especially her own, to be proud and active, and readily abandons her ideals of passivity and humility upon her conversion to Undershaft's morality. Humility is too often the bedfellow of powerlessness and cynicism. Humility stuck in the craw of the Undershaftian Bill Walker, standing in the way of his salvation, bending his independent and proud spirit in the direction of false salvation through atonement. Despising humility, Peter Shirley made himself proud

of his poverty and his powerlessness and cynical of wealth and power. Cusins' duplicity is really the cynical response of his pride to humility: he keeps his humble, disinterested ideals quite separate from his not so humble pragmatic interests. All are men whose natural inclinations are to dignity, independence, and action. The way to "brave manhood and eternal glory in heaven," Undershaft shows Barbara, is not a humble path, but a proud highway.

The character from whom the play takes its title, and the character who experiences salvation and conversion in the play, Barbara Undershaft, is the audience-surrogate and principal vitalist of the play. By identifying with Barbara, the audience dons her potential and her admirable ideals. It discovers its capacity to undergo the violent shock of facing the facts, and to come to a conviction of the sin of idealism. It also discovers the resilience of its ideals in weathering that shock. With Barbara, it learns Undershaft's lessons and discovers the only way to make its dreams come to life in the real world. But, at the outset of the play, Barbara, as a Salvationist, must appear a little extreme and outlandish to conventional audiences, and one must wonder how they could identify with this enthusiastic and unconventional girl. It is the attachment of Cusins to Barbara that makes her a more comfortable surrogate.

Cusins, as Barbara's fiance, lends her his credibility as an obviously intelligent, educated, cultured professor of Greek. He conveys almost immediately that he concurs with Lomax that there is really just a little bit of "tosh" about the Salvation Army. The respectability of his position cushions the rebellious unconventionalism requisite to her role as a vitalist. His rationality, in harness with her enthusiasm, offers an acceptable and exciting audience-surrogate. His philosophy of humanism

gives a theoretical validity to her disarming love of common folk. Cusins and Barbara together present the audience with a sympathetic, not to say flattering, self-image of intellectual and spiritual idealism and vitality.

From the point of view of Shaw's guidance of the audience around to his way of thinking, not much more is accomplished in Act I than the establishment of this identity with Cusins and Barbara. But much is accomplished by way of purging the audience of their conventional affiliations through the exposure of that most Philistine of establishments, Lady Britomart's household on Wilton Crescent. The chief means of exposure is the dramatic device of mechanicalness in character, dialogue, and situation to render the conventional comic. Philistines lend themselves to rigid and comic presentation because their relation to the institutions of the idealists is that of automatic and thoughtless adherence to the conventions to which such institutions give rise.

Lady Britomart is the arch-Philistine of the play, and her obeisance to convention is exemplified by her views on morality and immorality. Explaining to Stephen why she considers Undershaft an immoral man, she says:

> I really cannot bear an immoral man. I am not a Pharisee, I hope; and I should not have minded his merely doing wrong things: we are none of us perfect. . . . Just as one doesnt mind men practising immorality so long as they own that they are in the wrong by preaching morality; so I couldnt forgive Andrew for preaching immorality while he practised morality. (MB, 76)

Phrasing her absurd ideas logically reveals Lady Britomart's obliviousness to her absurdity, and the intrinsic thoughtlessness so deep-rooted in her character. By laughing at the patent senselessness of her nevertheless unimpeachable logic, the audience rejects her conventional morality.

Lady Britomart claims a high morality, but her pronouncements reveal that it is not so much a matter of belief as a matter of appearances. A stereotype of drawing room tyranny, Lady Britomart creates a comic situation when she requests her son's advice on their financial arrangements, as follows:

> Lady Britomart. [squaring herself at him rather aggressively] Stephen: may I ask how soon you intend to realize that you are a grown-up man, and that I am only a woman? . . . You must advise me: you must assume the responsibility.
> . . . . . .
> I must put my pride in my pocket and ask for it [Undershaft's assistance], I suppose. That is your advice, Stephen, is it not?
>
> Stephen. No.
>
> Lady Britomart. [sharply] Stephen!
>
> Stephen. [obstinately] I would die sooner than ask him for another penny.
>
> Lady Britomart. [resignedly] You mean that I must ask him. Very well, Stephen: it shall be as you wish. (MB, 69, 77)

Though this is most emphatically not Stephen's wish, Lady Britomart quite blithely overlooks her son's objection for the sake of the idea on which she is fixed. She does not want Stephen's advice at all. She has created a situation to fulfill the comic inevitability of her logic, and by manipulating her son through the interview, reveals him to be a puppet on the strings of her determined conventionalism. But, though Lady Britomart controls Stephen, she herself is controlled by habitual and rigidly conventional behaviour. She does not scruple to circumvent her "high morality" by the convention of "settled income" to elude the stigma of tainted money. What Stephen objects to on moral grounds, she is able to rationalize by the same morality. Lady Britomart's reasoning conceals an unwitting hypocrisy under the guise of perfect respectability, and the

labyrinth of pseudo-logic by which she explains her beliefs renders her the mechanical butt of our laughter.

Stephen Undershaft is the second comic character in the play. Chiefly, his comicality derives from his puppet-like subservience to his mother's tyranny. The opening of the play presents Stephen as no more than flotsam on the sea of his mother's changeable determination:

> Stephen. Whats the matter?
>
> Lady Britomart. Presently, Stephen.
>
> Stephen submissively walks to the settee and sits down. He takes up a Liberal weekly called The Speaker.
>
> Lady Britomart. Dont begin to read, Stephen. I shall require all your attention.
>
> Stephen. It was only wile I was waiting--
>
> Lady Britomart. Dont make excuses, Stephen. [He puts down The Speaker.] Now! [She finishes her writing; rises; and comes to the settee.] I have not kept you waiting very long, I think.
>
> Stephen. Not at all, mother.
>
> Lady Britomart. Bring me my cushion. [He takes the cushion from the chair at the desk and arranges it for her as she sits down on the settee.] Sit down. [He sits down and fingers his tie nervously.] Dont fiddle with your tie, Stephen: there is nothing the matter with it.
>
> Stephen. I beg your pardon. [He fiddles with his watch chain instead.]
>
> Lady Britomart. Now are you attending to me, Stephen?
>
> Stephen. Of course, mother.
>
> Lady Britomart. No: it's not of course. I want something much more than your everyday matter-of-course attention. I am going to speak to you very seriously, Stephen. I wish you would let that chain alone.
>
> Stephen. [hastily relinquishing the chain.] Have I done anything to annoy you, mother? If so, it was quite unintentional. (MB, 68)

The incongruity of being a grown man acting and being treated as a child, accepting his mother's control of his speech and action, makes Stephen comical. He is unthinking because Lady Britomart thinks for him, and rigidly machine-like in relation to her. We laugh at him because his mother "drives" him. Beyond that, Stephen is heir to his mother's conventional manners and morality, and firmly believes that there is "one true morality and one true religion" (MB, 90) and that "Right is right; and wrong is wrong; and if a man cannot distinguish them properly, he is either a fool or a rascal: thats all" (MB, 77). Though a respectable Harrow and Cambridge spawned gentleman, and connected to the peerage, Stephen's response to life is as mindlessly and rigidly puppet-like as his response to his mother. In Act III, Stephen successfully rids himself of his mother's aegis, but is still under the control of the conventional morality to which she has brought him up. This prompts him, "actually smiling, and putting his hand on his father's shoulder with indulgent patronage," to contradict his father's revealing remarks on the government of England:

> Really, my dear Father, it is impossible to be angry with you. You dont know how absurd all this sounds to me. You are properly proud of having been industrious enough to make money; and it is greatly to your credit that you have made so much of it. But it has kept you in circles where you are valued for your money and deferred to for it, instead of in the doubtless very old-fashioned and behind-the-times public school and university where I formed my habits of mind. It is natural for you to think that money governs England; but you must allow me to think I know better. (MB, 152)

Stephen Undershaft is an upper-class prig and Philistine, and the folly of his class is exposed in the comedy of his mechanically respectable and moral conduct.

In addition to scotching any Philistine tendencies in the

audience, these two comic characters act as foils, and serve to illuminate certain characteristics in Barbara and Cusins. Though Lady Britomart does not know where her daughter picked it up, she notes that Barbara has "a propensity to have her own way and order people about" (MB, 79). Bossy like her mother,[4] Barbara has a belief in her morality as firm as Lady Britomart's, and is as opposed to what Undershaft stands for as Lady Britomart is. Barbara manipulates Bill Walker in much the same fashion her mother manipulates Stephen. But Lady Britomart is a foil to Barbara in that the shallowness of all her prattle about morality serves to highlight the depth and sincerity of Barbara's morality by contrast. The impact of necessity on her ideals results in hypocrisy, whereas Barbara never sheds her ideals. On the other hand, the fall of Lady Britomart's Philistine morality before the laughter of the audience parallels the destruction of Barbara's idealism.

Cusins, like Stephen, has a set of firm beliefs, though his "larger loves and diviner dreams than the fireside ones" are both more informed and less hypocritical than Stephen's. He, like Stephen, sets himself up as more knowledgeable than Undershaft, and intends to teach him a thing or two. Both are "sons" of Undershaft, and have a claim on his inheritance, both concrete and symbolic. Stephen is a foil to Cusins in that the pettiness and purblindness of Stephen's morality emphasizes by contrast the humaneness and insight of Cusins' ideals. But the dissolution of Stephen's "one true morality" in the spectator's critical laughter foreshadows the destruction with which Cusins' beliefs must meet. Neither the Philistine conventionalism of Stephen and Lady Britomart, nor the pristine idealism of Barbara and Cusins can withstand the blinding glare of the facts.

Barbara's adroit management of Bill Walker's conviction of sin at the beginning of Act II reaffirms the spectators' identification with her, and flatters them that their representative will win the contest of saviours. She is at once virtuous, charitable, and unyielding, as well as witty and free from malice in her dealings with this reprehensible bully. She masters the situation with a minimum of uncomfortable emotionalism, so doubts about the acceptability of a Salvationist disappear. Indeed, Cusins' rather frivolous interference in her efforts to convert Walker impugns the audience's respect for him. As Undershaft works at undermining Cusins' idealism, the sympathies and ideals of the audience gradually consolidate into Barbara's apparently inviolable safekeeping. In effect, Shaw strips away the sophisticated patina of of erudition, style, and cleverness in which Cusins sheathes Barbara's burning faith. And, because Cusins' qualities appear weaker and more dubious, Barbara's faith now seem all the more reliable and strong. Barbara becomes the bearer of all our hopes and ideals, without benefit of sophistication, aestheticism, or esoteric reasoning, but spiritually strong and confident.

From the point of view of audience response, the neutralization of Cusins as a buttress to Barbara, and his disqualification as a repository of the audience's trust, serve to isolate idealism from the intellectual powers that often insulate it, and to demonstrate how pragmatic those intellectual powers generally are. As Cusins' attachment made Barbara acceptable in a conventional world, but did not strengthen her spiritually, so intellect is a guise that may obscure the fallacies of idealism, but ultimately cannot, and perhaps will not, protect it from conflict with reality. And, as Cusins' defection seems a betrayal to the

audience and to Barbara, so reality seems a betrayal to idealists when first they perceive it. While Undershaft brings his gospel of realism to bear on Cusins, drawing out the pragmatist from the idealistic professor of Greek, the trappings under which the audience has kept its conventional ideals hidden are gradually removed, leaving that idealism naked to the light of the facts, to which it is shortly to be exposed.

The audience is brought to a conviction of the sin of idealism, of ignoring reality, when Barbara's faith is shaken by her father's purchase of the Salvation Army. Her despair and shock at the powerlessness of her ideals in the face of temporal necessity are shared in various ways by the audience. The spectator's response is disillusionment: there must be something wrong with a world that will not support such admirable ideals, just as there must be something wrong with Undershaft, who so callously and ruthlessly destroys Barbara's faith. Disillusionment would lead the cynical spectator to share Bill Walker's response, "Wot prawce selvytion nah?" If the cultivated Philistine in the audience has not already deserted by foreseeing that Undershaft would prevail, he would now helplessly regret having trusted so much to the unsophisticated Major Barbara. Cusins, in fact, is just such a cultivated Philistine of the intellectual classes, with his "middle-class ideas," and he has helplessly abandoned himself to Undershaft's spell, though he has not converted to the religion of money and guns. But, the idealist spectator would share Barbara's total despair and grief at the passing of her idealistic "paradise of enthusiasm and prayer and soul saving." But, whatever the result of the disillusionment, the audience must now admit the invalidity of the ideals of humility and passivity in the face of reality, admit that their discomfort marks a conviction of the sinfulness of their idealism.

Such ideals only encourage and cultivate the evils of poverty and brutality and drunkeness, which thrive because they are unopposed by an equal strength. Such ideals are luxuries won only after a brutal battle with reality, changing real poverty into real well-being. Bill Walker's egotism and brutality are more in keeping with reality than Barbara's ideals of passivity and humility.

In "John Bull's Other Island," after the audience comes to a conviction of sin by rejecting its surrogate, it is impelled to transfer its allegiance to Keegan's worthwhile and honourable philosophy of realism. But, while the spectator may believe in Keegan, realistically he must concede the match to the powerful Syndicate. Thus the play's ultimately tragic ending. In "Major Barbara," Act II closes with much the same despair of the future on the part of the audience. Act III, however, goes on to provide a positive affirmation of power on the side of Shaw's philosophy of the Life Force, by converting the audience-surrogate to the gospel of realism and power. But, at the beginning of Act III, the spectator is in a veritable Slough of Despond, a quandary between giving up on Barbara's vanquished idealism, and reluctance to accept Undershaft's self-serving realism. Like Cusins, the audience's convictions are routed, and lest it should be tempted to follow Cusins' devious plan to divide ideals from the facts, Shaw carefully exposes the folly of that strategy.

Scene I of Act III returns the action to Wilton Crescent, bastion of conventional morality, and the audience is invited to relax in the comfortable mindlessness that such conventionalism offers. More overt conventional inclinations, however, are quelled again by the corrective influence of laughter at the comic rigidity of the Philistines, particularly Stephen Undershaft. Stephen's newly acquired freedom from

his mother's apron-strings parallels Cusins' recent defection from Barbara. Barbara's "dear little Dolly boy" has something of the Philistinism that so thoroughly characterizes her mother's son, and his foil. Cusins' is a more intellectual and sophisticated version, cynical idealism. Barbara returns to Philistine dress, and her zeal lies dormant and seemingly moribund. The audience, therefore, must rely on Cusins as its representative, and his emancipated Philistinism is only too comfortably familiar.

As Undershaft unfolds the doctrine of realism and power, the audience, like Cusins, has an increasingly difficult time keeping its wounded idealism pragmatically and protectively shielded from the facts. Barbara, as its original surrogate, by the spectre-like role she plays until nearly the end of the play, fails to supply it with a viable alternative. The audience struggles further and further into the quandary that is the essence of cynical idealism. Finally, Barbara's vitalism emerges to reconcile Undershaft's gospel of realism to her ideals by denouncing Cusins' "middle-class ideas," and summoning the spectators from their artistic drawing rooms. Though Undershaft saves Barbara by his faith in the power of reality, Barbara saves Cusins and the audience, by bringing them to a second conviction of sin, of surreptitious idealism. Barbara reclaims her office as surrogate, and articulates the new, realistic faith of achieving her ideal by the way of the Life Force: through this life, this factory of hell, and this life only, will hell be raised to heaven and man to God.

Contemporary theatre reviews criticized Act III as an unsuccessful attempt to bring off Undershaft's triumph and Barbara's conversion. Subsequently, Shaw scholars have been "anxiously explanatory"

in their confirmations or denials of this verdict on the ending's affirmation of Undershaft's gospel of reality in terms of Shaw's philosophy. All seem to stumble over the character of Undershaft, though in a letter to Gilbert Murray, Shaw resolves the problem of Undershaft's profession:

> As to the triumph of Undershaft, that is inevitable because I am in the mind that Undershaft is in the right, and that Barbara and Adolphus, with a great deal of his natural insight and cleverness, are very young, very romantic, very academic, very ignorant of the world. I think it would be unnatural if they were able to cope with him. Cusins averts discomfiture & scores off him by wit & humorous dexterity; but the facts are too much for him; and his strength lies in the fact that he, like Barbara, refuses the Impossibilist position (which their circumstances make particularly easy for them) even when the alternative is the most sensationally anti-moral department of commerce. The moral is drawn by Lomax "There is a certain amount of tosh about this notion of wickedness."[5]

The choice of Undershaft's realism must be very difficult for Barbara and Cusins, and for the audience, because in real life, the facts are brutal. Lomax's moral, that "there is a certain amount of tosh about this notion of wickedness," raises the question whether it is not more immoral to take the Impossibilist position, and hide from the facts in an artistic drawing room, than to actively participate in the harsh world as Undershaft does. The "anti-moral" nature of Undershaft's profession is integral to the play's anti-idealism.

Perhaps the difficulty in accepting the ending of the play arises from inherent Impossibilism on the part of the audience. Only obdurate idealism can thwart the spectator's surrender to the very seductive Undershaft and his philosophy. As Shaw says, "for plays of this class, the great question is whether the audience will be a failure or a success" (MB, 197). Though Shaw can hardly be blamed for the intransigence

of his audience, perhaps his Barbara does not dispel Cusins' "middle-class ideas" forcefully enough to purge the spectators of theirs. Of course, much has been accomplished if the audience comes away perplexed by Barbara's and Cusins' defection to the enemy, and remains very much tempted by that enemy itself. Only a lingering idealism can prevent us from "going straight up to heaven for a moment"[6] with Major Barbara. For she transcends Undershaft's gospel of reality, and the temporal salvation its power offers. Barbara's concern for the spiritual salvation that, if it can only follow temporal salvation, is nevertheless a higher form, marks her succession to and displacement of Undershaft as the most highly evolved servant of the Life Force. It is a case of "the ideal is dead: long live the ideal."

FOOTNOTES

[1]Bernard F. Dukore, Bernard Shaw, Playwright. Aspects of Shavian Drama (Columbia, Missouri: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1973), p. 80.

[2]Undershaft's militant and violent creed is difficult to swallow, especially in the light of his destructive profession. But to reject him on this basis is to fall into the pitfall that Shaw is at pains in this play to warn the audience against. Undershaft represents fact, and to discount his validity is what Shaw calls the Impossibilist position. The realist position, and Shaw's, is that Undershaft, representing reality and power, has an existential priority that though difficult, must be accepted.

[3]Shaw, Collected Letters 1898-1910, pp. 565-66.

[4]Shaw, Collected Letters 1898-1910, p. 580.

[5]Shaw, Collected Letters 1898-1910, p. 565-66.

[6]Shaw, Collected Letters 1898-1910, p. 720.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

> I am getting on with the new play scrap by scrap; and the part of the millionaire cannon founder is becoming more and more formidable. Broadbent and Keegan thrown into one, with Mephistopheles thrown in.[1]

The character of Undershaft is a good point on which to commence a comparison of "John Bull's Other Island" and "Major Barbara." While both plays oppose one realist to two idealists, the division of power is so differently distributed that it is impossible to equate Barbara and Cusins, on the one hand, with Broadbent and Doyle on the other, just as any equation of Undershaft with Keegan is off the mark. In "John Bull," practical power is on the side of the idealists, while, in "Major Barbara," Undershaft, the realist, possesses all the real world power. This disparity accounts for the different endings of the plays. "John Bull" culminates on a tragic note, while "Major Barbara" ends in triumph.

Undershaft combines the best qualities of Broadbent and Keegan, without being emasculated by their weaknesses. He has Broadbent's geniality, drive, and effectiveness, without his idealism and compartmentalized mind. Undershaft is always deliberate in his action and speech, and never falls into the mechanical behaviour that makes Broadbent so laughable. Most importantly, Undershaft possesses the same worldly power that Broadbent does. Like Keegan, Undershaft is a Shavian realist and recognizes the spiritual promptings of the will of which he is a part. He has Keegan's insight, his courage, his conviction, and his thoroughly realistic morality. But Undershaft's vision does not dissipate

into what Keegan calls his "madman's dream." Undershaft is arrogant and willful enough to say "Must" and his history is a tale of struggle and determination to realize his ideals on this earth.

For the realist too must have "ideals," though his "pretty pictures" are not devised as masks for unsavory reality, but as models for an improved reality. His goal of perfection may be as fictitious as conventional ideals, but it generates action for bettering the world instead of paralyzing through blindness. Shaw sees conventional idealism as life-negating:

> The realist at last loses patience with ideals altogether and sees in them only something to blind us, something to numb us, something to murder self in us, something whereby, instead of resisting death, we can disarm it by committing suicide. The Idealist, who has taken refuge with the ideals because he hates himself and is ashamed of himself, thinks that all this is so much the better. The realist, who has come to have a deep respect for himself and faith in the validity of his own will, thinks it so much the worse. (Q, 31)

The "ideals" of the realist are the images of his realistic imagination that portray "serious Utopias . . . as yet unexperienced." The iconoclasm of the vitalist, however, may have a negative effect on the realistic imagination. Iconoclasm may dominate in the effort to "penetrate through ideals to the truth," so the realist is always in danger of dismissing models for a better world along with conventional ideals. The audience, newly introduced to realism, is in just such danger at the conclusion of "John Bull's Other Island."

"John Bull" presents an impasse between the idealists and the realist. Though Broadbent, Doyle, and their Syndicate "win" on a physical level, Keegan prevails spiritually. Keegan presents a serious Utopia, but casts it himself as a "madman's dream." His Utopia may be no farther

off than the hell of this world, perhaps; but it is still not of this world. The play ends on a tragic note because, though the audience believes in the "desirability" of Keegan's Utopia, it agrees with him that, in this hellish world of Broadbents and Doyles, the "feasibility" of his Utopia is questionable. That is why "John Bull" is such an uncomfortable play. The negative process of destroying ideals overflows into the vision of the Life Force as voiced by Keegan. The audience leaves with a sense of guilt, struggling between Keegan's right thinking and the wrong reality that make this world a hell. Hence, the spectators' discomfort and conviction of sin. Convicted as idealists, they are guilty of a world that now prevents Keegan's dream from coming true. Thus arises the impasse between idealism and realism.

A similar impasse is reconstructed by the end of Act II in "Major Barbara." The audience is disillusioned because Barbara's desirable ideals are proven unfeasible, and Undershaft's vision, however feasible, seems quite undesirable. Barbara is impotent virtue and Undershaft powerful wickedness. But the difference between the plays lies in who experiences despair. In "John Bull," it is the impotence of the realist, Peter Keegan, to realize his Utopia that leaves us so uncomfortable. In "Major Barbara," we despair for the idealist and her Utopia. But, in Act III, Undershaft delineates the desirability, and more importantly, the feasibility of his realistic Utopia.

Undershaft's goal is full-fed freedom for himself and his fellow man, and he accordingly rallies his will and passion to that end. But, once his goal is accomplished at Perivale St. Andrews, he sees that physical well-being is not enough. Consequently, he seeks to enlist Barbara for the purpose of bettering the world on the spiritual level.

Thus, "Major Barbara" is a play about positive action for the goals of the Life Force, and shows us the means of resolving the impasse of powerless realism and powerful idealism. The last act of "Major Barbara" marks a shift toward religious inspiration on a realistic as well as spiritual plane. Undershaft's infusion of passionate intellect and will breathes life into Keegan's visionary realism to resolve the impasse in favour of realism. Without her father's legacy, Barbara's Utopia of "brave manhood and eternal glory in heaven" is no more of this world than Keegan's dream. In Act III, the audience sees Undershaft's Perivale St. Andrews where power and realism, harnessed by his will and passion, unite in a better world. As soon as the audience is converted, with Barbara, to his gospel and sees that it is indeed a better world, this viewing constitutes a "foreseeing and being prepared for" such improvements in real life. Barbara, the spiritual surrogate, is the spectator's means of testing the desirability of this Utopia. Undershaft's model for world betterment falls short of Barbara's spiritual vision in terms of furthering the Life Force. Just as only his realism provides a means of making her vision come to life, only she can convey to his the spiritual validity it lacks. This she does by her conversion to and transcendence of his religion. Cusins, the intellectual surrogate, is the spectator's means of weighing and retesting his new, more accurate moral judgment against his old ideals and conventional judgment. Cusins tenaciously guards his unfeasible idealism, despite what he learned about the real world and true judgment in Act II. By renewing, through Cusins, the rejection of impractical idealism, the audience has a deeper sense of the validity and genuine possibility of the new "ideals" of the Life Force, that, through Barbara, it is concurrently adopting.

In both plays, the audience enters the drama with its idealistic surrogate, and, because it finds old ideals and standards objectionable in the light of the truth to which it penetrates in the course of the play, it converts to realism. In "John Bull," the audience takes a new surrogate, and in "Major Barbara," it undergoes conversion with its surrogate. Whatever the process, it may be seen as the acquisition of a new, more accurate moral judgment. Judging the end of "John Bull," the audience must despair for the impotence of the realist, and consequently for its own impotence, and that judgment it takes with it away from the play. If that despair goads people to fight for power for the realistic way of life, then ultimately the play cannot be seen as a negative experience. Indeed, in "Major Barbara," Shaw takes that judgment, and shows how it can act as just such an incentive to positive action. Again, the audience experiences despair through their surrogate, but it despairs for a powerless idealist. Power is something independent of idealism and realism, but necessary to both if either is to becoming effective. As the idealist is seen to become both realistic and powerful, the audience's judgment at the end of the play can be confident and optimistic, rather than despairing and guilty. Power is the key element, and Undershaft's lesson on the role and nature of power, based on the relation of reality to necessity, reinforces the possibility and desirability of fighting for power to fulfill that confidence and optimism.

But aside from the sometimes enjoyable, but more often uncomfortable grind of learning Shaw's lessons, the spectators experience the exhilaration of being vitalists for the short spell they identify with Keegan and Barbara. This is perhaps the most important aspect of "becoming" the drama. The possibility of actually being a realist like

Barbara or Keegan, which is what the lessons in the plays try to prove, is made to seem still more possible and extremely enticing to the spectator who has played the part for a while. The vivid and unforgettable quality of Shaw's plays grows from this inspiring and dynamic process of participation in the drama.

For the object of these plays is to bring home to us Shaw's philosophy in such a way as to make its validity, and its demands on real life, inescapable. Shaw wants us to think and live in the service of the Life Force. In the early plays, he shows us how life should not be, but is. "Man and Superman" is his first depiction of the vision of how life can and should be, and it is often viewed, with "John Bull's Other Island" and "Major Barbara," as the first in a trio of plays on this theme. In the "Don Juan in Hell" dream sequence, Shaw portrays, in the compellingly logical dream discussion, his realistic Utopia through the character of Don Juan. In his next play, "John Bull's Other Island," Shaw moves his realist from the otherworldliness of the Hell Scene to test Juan's vision in a concrete and modern reality. But, in the play's dream-like Irish setting, Keegan's Utopia seems more a tragic fantasy than a triumphant reality. In "Major Barbara," however, Shaw succeeds in bodying forth this vision as a possible and powerful realistic alternative to the foolish and empty romance of idealism. Undershaft's power in the real world provides an indisputably convincing foundation for Shaw's philosophy, making Barbara's saving grace immediately imperative in the inescapable spell it weaves through the audience.

FOOTNOTE

[1]Shaw, Collected Letters 1898-1910, p. 542.

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